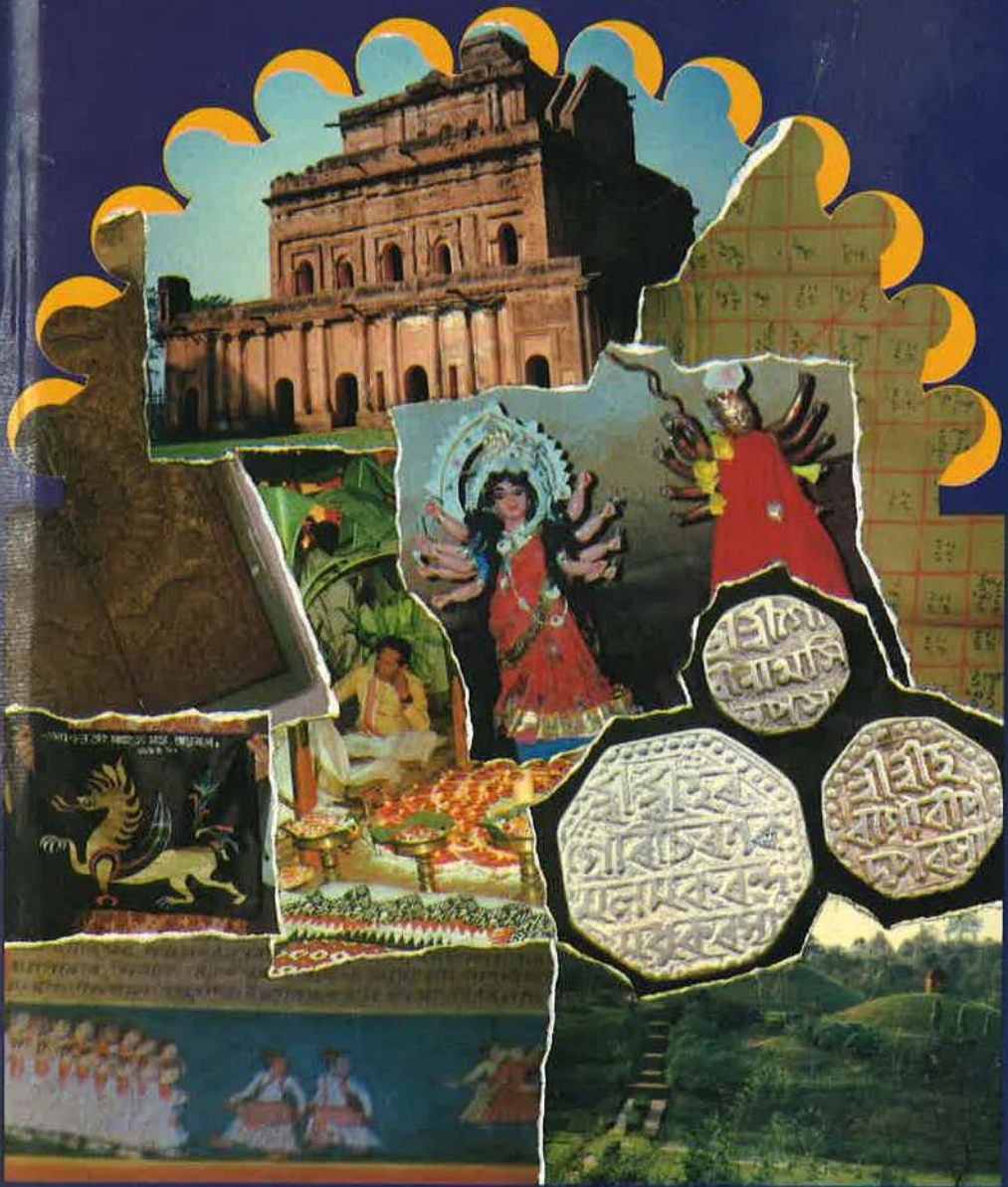
In the Meadows of Gold:

Telling Tales of the Swargadeos at the Cross roads of Assam



Sayeeda Yasmin Saikia

IN THE MEADOWS OF GOLD

TELLING TALES OF THE SWARGADEOS AT THE CROSSROADS OF ASSAM

Sayeeda Yasmin Saikia

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To Mom, Dad and Chad

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Preface

The history of India is a history of 'crossroads'. Indian culture and society have been enriched by alliances of eastern and western experiences, outlooks and cultures. While the impact of the west continue to be thoroughly researched, the impact of the eastern peoples and cultures tend to be neglected in Indian scholarshilp. This book is a preliminary attempt to document the varieties of exchanges which took place in the eastern India corridor in Assam. It is not a history of Assam. It is a story of the agents and processes which came together in the Assamese 'crossroads' giving shape to heterogenous peoples and cultures as they encountered and exchanged with each other. The stories of the crossroads peoples is the story of the Tai-Ahom polity. The central figure in the plot is the Swargadeo, who emerged as the metaphor of the Tai-Ahom culture. The story of exchanges and interludes, battles and friendships which shaped the history of the Tai-Ahom polity are narrated in indigenous accounts called *buranjis*. The *Satsari Assam Buranji* is one among the many local voices which tell the tale of the Tai-Ahom royalty and the polity. However, the production of a 'text society' in the Assamese crossroads has not yet been understood or researched by scholars. A simplistic explanation is that Sukapha, the pioneering hero of the Ahoms, commanded the scribes to note all events as they happended, and thus emerged the tradition of writing in Assam. His successors followed the pattern of recording all events, as such the *buranjis* served a memory function, to teach the ignorant men the great events and the historical role of the Ahoms in it. Nowadays, these narratives are read as 'historical texts' arranged in a linear order, in which history is a slow progression of events and incidences and the historic agents, the people, are engaged in constant purposeful action.

My research has a two fold purpose. First, it is an attempt to generate curiosity in indigenous accounts, to hear the voices of local peoples tell their own stories. The translation of a selection of indigenous narratives called the *Satsari Assam Buranji* is presented in the first section of the book. Secondly, this research is a preliminary effort to revise the stereotype image of Assam as the

shadowland of culture and civilization, where the peoples and land were isolated and impenetrable by outsiders. I have tried to map Assam within the discourse of encounters and transformations where history did not follow from sequence to sequence, rather it was spontaneous and erratic. This comprises the second part of the book. Finally, the Ahoms referred to Assam as Mung-dung-sung-kham or the 'land full of golden gardens'. The Assamese, today, are struggling to re-make their *Sunar Assam* or golden Assam. I have borrowed the title of my book from these very concepts.

The story of the Tai-Ahom polity is recounted at length in the *Satsari Buranji* - 'the chain made of seven gems'. Seven independent chronicles were collated by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan and renamed as *Satsari Assam Buranji.* Although this *buranji* was thrice published in the Assamese language (1960, 1964 and 1969), this is the first attempt to translate it into English. The *Satsari* has been previously used by various scholars to draw 'historical' information about the Tai-Ahom rule in Assam. I have tried to let the text tell its own story and therefore refrained from extensively using other buranjis which have other tales to tell. This research does not pretend to be anything more than a preliminary analysis of a few agencies that shaped the history of the Assamese crossroads, also referred to in this book as the Lauhitya valley.[1]

The original chronicles of the *Satsari Buranji* were written in the modern Assamese language. They were collated and edited by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. The seven chronicles were arranged in a chronological order of narration in keeping with the western historiographical tradition. I have tried to maintain the simple, communicative style of the original manuscripts in the translation.

---

1. Assam is a modern construction made up of three units - central, lower and upper Assam, including the Barak valley. The earliest mention to the vast region of modern Assam as *para-Lauhitya* comes from Kautilya's *Arthashastra.* It simply meant the land along the banks of the Lauhit river (*Arthashastra*, vol. i, transl. and ed. T. Ganapati Shastri, Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1984, p. 190). In this book, the term Lauhitya valley is used in a narrow sense of upper Assam or the Kingdom of the Tai-Ahom. Whenever I use the term Lauhitya valley I mean the Tai-Ahom kingdom only. Otherwise, I have used the modern name Assam to denote the entire Brahmaputra valley which historically consisted of many autonomous and semi-autonomous chiefdoms of 'plains' and 'tribal' peoples.

Everything was possible to translate, but I have left the techinical and cultural terms in the original form. These are explained in the footnotes. Also, in the translation I have maintained the sequence of paragraphs and the numbers as they have appeared in the published Assamese editions, which will enable scholars familiar only with the English language to conveniently use this publication for citation and reference. As well, those proficient in the Assamese and the English languages can use both the texts concommitanly.

The maunscripts are not dated, but the chronological order of their arrangement provides a more or less continuous flow of activities and events. The order of arrangement of the *buranjis* should not lead one to assume that the first *buranji* was written before the second. Generally, it is true to say that the events mentioned in the preceding *buranji* are of an earlier period than those of the following one, but some events are repeated, usually in the next *buranji* since the periods of narration at times overlaped. This is particularly evident in the third and fourth *buranjis*. Both chronicles cover the same period, but the fourth extends further into the reign of Gaurinath Singha (1780-1794). Careful scrutiny of the distinctive style and themes provide clues to their dates of composition. For instance, the third *buranji* has a detailed description of the enthronement ceremony of Swargadeo Pramatta Singha (1744-1751). It appears that the author of this *buranji* was an eye witness to the ceremony. The *buranji* was written after the event, likely in the reign of the succeeding Swargadeo, Rajeshwar Singha (1751-1769). From my study of the manuscripts, I date the composition of the seven *buranjis* between the late seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries.

The *buranjis* do not reveal the name of the authors. It appears that the first *buranji* called 'From Khun Lung and Khun Lai to Arjun Dihingiya Raja' was commissioned to be written by Atan Bura Gohain Rajmantri Dangaria. The patron of the manuscript was the most important and powerful man after the *Swargadeo* in seventeeth century Assam. As such the information found in this *buranji* is of speical importance. The name Gangadhar Hastakhyaram appears at the end of the second *buranji*. However, it cannot be determined whether Gangadhar was the author or a scribal help who took notes from the narrator of the *buranji*. Precise

information about the authors or copyists of the *buranjis* numbered three, four, five, six and seven are not available. Nor is there information about the availability of other versions of these *buranjis*. Therefore, comparative analysis of orthographic, textual and chronological details is greatly limited at this time. This further hampers the determination of authorship, although it can be safely assumed that some of these *buranjis* were written or copied by the Tai-Ahom priests for the *Swargadeo* or his chief ministers. None of these *buranjis* were written by one person alone. I infer this from the orthography, the variety of style, and at times abrupt beginning and end of various passages within one text. It appears that a team of scribes took notes which they then collated into a *buranji*.

Each *buranji* bears a distinctive prose style, making the reading of each an unique experience, even though at times the information presented is repetitive. An analysis of the literary style indicates that these *buranjis* were written in different places and at different times. Some of them reflect a marked influence of the Tai-Ahom language. In the first *buranji*, the Tai-Ahom words such as *rupit*, *changmai*, *hengdan*, *khun*, *ru-ring*, *phak*, etc; offer some examples. So too in the third *buranji* we come across a number of Tai-Ahom words mostly of the ceremonial kind. Other *buranjis* are replete with Sanskrit words like *brahman, pandit, rishi, bairagi, swarganarayan, gossain, yudha, adesh, sandhi, ud-dhar, pratigya, vidhan.* The *buranjis* written after the long-drawn confrontation with the Muslim armies of Bengal and Delhi, especially the third and the fifth *buranjis* contain a number of Perso-Arabic derivations, like *Surpaw* (the Assamese version of the Persian word *Sar-a-pa*), *badshah, nawab, subedar, jamadar, kaman, barud*, etc. English words such as *mister*, *captain*, *battalion*, *company*, etc; appear in the sixth chronicle.

Most of the *buranjis* in the *Satsari* collection have a dual dating system - the Indian *saka* era and the Tai-Ahom *lakli* calendar. The Tai-Ahom cycle is known as *Tasosingha* and comprises sixty years in each cycle. In the first *buranji* only the Tai-Ahom *laklis* are noted in the entire text. But the *laklis* provided are wrongly inserted or sometimes made-up without consulting the Tai-Ahom calendar. Most probably the scribe did not know the system and was advised by another person less knowledgeable in the Tai-Ahom language. We cannot depend on these dates to re-construct

the chronology of the Tai-Ahom history. In the fourth *buranji*, in one instance, mention is made to the *Asari* system. One *Asar* is three and a half years. For the rest of the text of the fourth *buranji* and all through the fifth *buranji* the chronology is maintained in the *saka* era. Neither the Hijri calendar nor the Christian era is ever used in the *Satsari*.

Chronology of the Swargadeos

Sukapha	1228-1268
Sutepha	1268-1281
Subinpha	1281-1293
Sukhanpha	1293-1332
Sukranpha	1332-1364
Sutupha	1364-1376
Interregnum	1376-1380
Tyaokhamti	1380-1389
Interregnum	1389-1397
Sudanpha or Bamuni Konwar	1397-1407
Sujanpha	1407-1422
Suphakpha	1422-1439
Susenpha	1439-1488
Suhenpha	1488-1493
Supinpha	1493-1497
Suhungmung or Dihingiya Raja	1497-1539
Suklengmung or Garhgaonyan Raja	1539-1552
Sukhampha or Khora Raja	1552-1603
Susenpha alias Burha Raja or Pratap Singha	1603-1641
Surampha or Bhaga Raja	1641-1644
Sutyinpha or Nariya Raja	1644-1648
Sutamla or Jayadhvaj Singha	1648-1663
Chakradhvaj Singha or Supungmung	1663-1670
Sunyatpha or Udayditya Singha	1670-1673
Suklampha or Ramadhvaj	1673-1675
Suhung	1675
Gobar	1675
Sujinpha	1675-1677
Sudaipha or Parbatiya Raja	1677-1679

Sulikpha or Lara Raja	1679-1681
Supatpha or Gadadhar Singha	1681-1696
Rudra Singha or Sukhrumpha	1696-1716
Siva Singha or Sutanpha	1716-1744
Pramatta Singh or Sunenpha	1744-1751
Rajeshwar Singha or Surempha	1751-1769
Ramakanta (ursurper)	1769-1770
Lakshmi Singha or Sunyeopha	1769-1780
Gaurinath Singha or Suhitpangpha	1780-1795
Bharati Singha (Rebel)	1791-1793
Sarvananda (Rebel)	1793-1795
Kamaleshwar Singha or Suklingpha	1795-1810
Chakradhvaj Singha or Sudingpha	1810-1818
Purandar Singha	1818-1819
Chandrakanta Singha (2nd time)	1819-1820
Brajanath Singha	Feb. to April 1818
Jogeshwar Singha (under the Burmese)	1821
Burmese Rule	1819-1825
British Rule began	1826

Notes on translation and transliteration

For the literal translation of the *buranji* I consulted the enlarged and revised seventh edition of the *Hemkosha* Dictionary of Hemchandra Barua (Assam Administration, 1900) and the Ahom Lexicons edited by B. Barua and Nandalal Deodhai Phukan, published by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam (1991)*. There is no method by which an exact transliteration of Assamese and Assamese pronunciation of Tai language words can be done in the Roman script. This is particularly problematic when the sounds 'o' and 'h' occur in some Assamese words. Only a person familiar with the Assamese language would know that in some cases the vowel 'a' should be pronounced as 'o', and likewise the consonant 's' as 'h'. For instance, 'Satsari' reads as 'Hat-hori' in Assamese, and 'Swargadeo' is 'Swargodeo'. As yet, local scholars have not decided what should be the exact spelling for the word 'Assam'. It is variously written. I have maintained a simple phonemic style for the transliteration of Assamese, as well as, the Tai cultural words, institutional terms, proper names and technical terms that occured in the text. All these are italicized.

* From now onwards known as D.H.A.S.

Acknowledgements

This book is an outgrowth of my Master's Thesis which I submitted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, U.S.A. (1992). This year (1994) when I came back home, to Assam, to do field work for my current project on the Tai peoples, Krishan Kumar of Spectrum Publishing offered to publish the thesis. The revision took me more than six months to complete. I had to find time between my long sojourns to the remote Tai Villages in Upper Assam and archival research for my present project. However, I have enjoyed every moment of re-searching the details. The initial research had begun in 1991, in a quiet, cold room in Madison, far away from Assam and the Ahoms about whom this book concerns.

However, the tale of this book goes back to 1984 and the venue was Aligarh Muslim University. Professor Irfan Habib, who was then the chairperson of the Department of History, once asked me why do I write Saikia for a surname, and what does it actually mean? I gave him an explanation, but the question stuck in my head. Years later in America, I was forced to ask myself the question how come my family surname is Saikia yet we are socially Muslims? The process of personal questioning became intense as I confronted curious strangers in America who never hesitated to ask me where I am from. When I tell them I am an Indian, they normally respond 'but you don't look like one.' I thank Professor Habib, as well, the passerby who provoked me to think and reflect on my self-image. My personal question gradually grew to a larger context of searching for the 'Tai-Ahom image.'

Through the entire project many people have reached out to help me. They have contributed to this research study in many meaningful ways, and I thank all of them for making this book possible. A Special Villas Fellowship for 1991-92 from the Department of History, University of Wisconsin-Madison, enabled me to start graduate school work in Madison. But for the constant support of the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin-Madison the project would not have taken shape. The Graduate School approved the research project for funding for over three semesters (1992-94) which provided me with time and an

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Introduction to the chronicles

Chronicle I. The chronicle describes in detail the political and military activities of the Tai-Ahoms in Assam from the mid-thirteenth to the later-seventeenth centuries. The process of the Tai-Ahom settlement in the Lauhitya valley or upper Assam is the main theme of this buranji. According to this chronicle, the fifteenth century was a period of rapid transformation of the Tai-Ahom polity in Assam. The decisive event, at this time, was the defeat of the Chutias of Sadiya. The re-organization of the military structure due to continuous warfare with the rivals such as the Kacharis, 'Bengalis' and the recalcitrant groups within the valley is described in considerable details in this buranji. After a detailed exposition of the re-organization of the administrative and military structure, the buranji, once again, reverts to a narration of the military campaigns which formed the second stage of invasion by 'the army of Bengal'. The buranji recounts a number of social and cultural regulations announced by the Swargadeo to maintain a degree of distinction between the Tai-Ahoms and the newly incorporated peoples of the valley. Concomitantly, the buranji narrates the process of Brahmanization of the Tai-Ahom court.

Finally, the invasion of Assam by Nawab Mir Jumla is described in detail in this buranji. The Tai-Ahoms were defeated in the battle of Saraighat and had to surrender their autonomy to the Mughal Badshah at Delhi. The buranji ends with a description of the factional politics in the Tai-Ahom royal court over the question of succession to the Swargadeo.

Chronicle II. The second buranji also begins with an origin myth. The main theme of this buranji is the initial process of settlement of the Tai-Ahoms, and their emergence as a political power in upper Assam. The buranji records the alliances and also the bloody encounters between the Tai-Ahoms and the local peoples of the valley, such as the Morans, Barahis, Kacharis, and Nagas. According to this buranji, the Tai-Ahoms at this stage continued to remit tribute to the Nara king in upper Burma. After saka 1445, the situation changed dramatically. The Tai-Ahoms won a decisive

victory against the Chutias of Sadiya and thereafter asserted their independence.

The buranji has many details on the methods of capturing elephants, as well the articles of gift to royal houses of which women and elephants were prized presents. The names of a number of deities of the Hindu pantheon are also recorded in this buranji.

Chronicle III. The third buranji begins its narration in the late-fifteenth century, from the reign of Dihingiya Raja (1497-1539). A new post of *Bar Patra Gohain* was created in his reign, and he was designated the third minister of the royal administration. In keeping with the tradition of buranji writing (like the two previous buranjis), this buranji too emphasizes the political and military successes of the Tai-Ahoms between the fifteenth and mid-eighteenth centuries. Additionally, the buranji provides details concerning the religion of the Tai-Ahoms in this period.

From this buranji, it is evident that the Tai-Ahom relation with the Koch court of Kamata significantly altered the religious orientation of the Tai-Ahom Swargadeos. Brahmanic Hinduism was patronized. Politically, the Tai-Ahom suzerainty was challenged by the Kacharis and the Jaiantias. Finally, were the military attacks from Bengal that kept the Swargadeos preoccupied. After saka 1583, for a brief period of time the Swargadeo, according to this buranji, accepted vassalage to the Mughal Emperor. Ultimately, it was repudiated after they won a decisive victory at Guwahati.

Besides the descriptions of various military campaigns, other aspects of administration are also recounted in great detail in this buranji. The census of population and the land distribution system are described. Mention is also made to a famine that occurred in the reign of Chakradhvaj Singha (1663-1669).

The interplay of religion and politics is one of the more significant issues addressed in this buranji. A clash of interest between the Brahmanized court and Vaishnavite groups in the kingdom resulted in a serious breakdown of the administrative system. Kingship became vulnerable to factional politics and the period between the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century witnessed the quick succession of a number of kings. The other topics addressed in this buranji are the installation ceremony of the

Tai-Ahom Swargadeos, the forms of punishment and torture, articles of gift to other royal houses, the system of cultivation and waterworks in the kingdom, settlement of new territories, and incorporation of new peoples, including Bengali prisoners of war.

Chronicle IV. The fourth buranji repeats much of the information of the third buranji. However, additional information is available about the reign of Gaurinath Singha (1780-1794). Military successes of the Tai-Ahoms are recounted in considerable detail, especially the armed confrontations against tribal groups of the Daflas, Abors, Miris, Nagas and Mishimis.

This buranji, too, provides a detailed exposition of the changing religious orientation of the Tai-Ahom court and the consequences which followed in its wake. The distribution of elephants to court brahmans is noted as a major change, since all along elephants were considered the purview of the royal household. The dissemination of Brahmanic Hinduism was boosted by the construction of a number of temples in various parts of the kingdom. Following the advice of the court brahmans, Swargadeo Siva Singha refused to ascend the throne and in his place nominated his wife as *Bar Raja* or Chief king. This caused for the armed retaliation of the Vaishnava Muwamaria. The buranji ends its narration here. It appears that the mid-eighteenth century was the beginning of the downfall of the Tai-Ahom power in Assam.

Chronicle V. The fifth buranji covers the reign of two Swargadeos, Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-1663) and Chakradhvaj Singha (1663-1669). Since this is a period in which the Tai-Ahom court was significantly Brahmanized, the style of presentation and description of events are couched in Sanskrit terms. The buranji starts with a description of the installation ceremony of Swargadeo Jayadhvaj Singha. The most striking event in his reign was the devastating attack wrought by Nawab Mir Jumla. Descriptions of the various weapons of war are available in this buranji. The unique importance of the *hengdan* is also explained. The various attempts to shake off Mughal suzerainty in the reign of Chakradhvaj Singha are documented. The Tai-Ahom army was reorganized and special incentives were provided to soldiers to boost their morale. To a limited extent this buranji also provides information of the Tai-Ahom dress and jewelry.

Chronicle VI. This buranji covers the period from the reign of Kamaleshwar Singha (1795-1810) to Purnandar Singh (1818-1819). The theme is the military history of the Tai-Ahoms and the eventual demise of the power of the Swargadeos and the rise in power of the chief minister, the Bura Gohain. The buranji has a lengthy discussion on the training and mobilization of the Tai-Ahom armed forces against the recalcitrant Muwamorias, who were assisted by the Singphos, Kacharis, Khamti, Miri, Mishimi, Abor, and other non-Ahom peoples of upper Assam.

Court politics and the development of factions in the royal administration are the two major themes discussed in this buranji. It appears that the relation between the Bura Gohain and the Bar Phukan deteriorated considerably, inciting the Bar Phukan to seek first British, and later, Burmese help to overhaul the Tai-Ahom administrative set-up. The Tai-Ahom Swargadeo became a vassal of the king of Burma. At this stage, the British entered the political picture of Assam and finally annexed Assam in saka 1760 or 1826 A.D.

Finally, this buranji has a section on the funeral customs of the Tai-Ahom royalty.

Chronicle VII. The seventh buranji is a detailed description of the officers of the Tai-Ahom administration, and their powers and functions within the hierarchy. The administration appears to have been highly stratified. This buranji is particularly interesting for its description of the distinctive articles of use among ministers and officers which indicated the latter's position within the administrative hierarchy. Also, the buranji describes the royal assembly and the various court customs. Other subjects discussed in this buranji are the methods of punishment, the system of appointment of officers, and the stipulated code of conduct for wives of ministers and royal officers within the capital city.

PART I

Satsari Assam Buranji

Chronicle I

From Khun Lung-Khun Lai to Arjun Dihingia Raja

Ovations to Lord Sri Krishna. Ovations to Lord Shiva. This is an exposition of the lineage of the Swargarajas.[1] The Mahapatra Bura Gohain[2] in the service of the Swargadeo has commisioned the writing of this manuscript in *Rupit*.[3] Keep this in good faith. Show this manuscript to only a trustworthy and impartial person. The secrets of the king should be guarded by the pandits. Otherwise, one losses his honour. Do not give the document to anyone nor show it to anyone. 1

In ancient times, even after three years yugas[4] had elapsed, Brahma[5] could not create men. Hence he planted a gourd tree.

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1. Note the use of the term lineage. In the Assamese language it is called *Vamsavali* or *Vamsa katha*. The text is not called a buranji which generally nowadays, in the Assamese language means history.
2. The Bura Gohain was the chief minister of the king. This is an Assamese derivative. The original Tai-Ahom is not known, although few suggestions such as Bura-Kunhai, Thawphrangmung or Chao-phrang-mung are sometimes suggested. In the Assamese language Bura means 'old' or 'senior'.
3. Wade suggests that Roo-poot is a Tai-Ahom term meaning a 'document of knowledge'. 'Roo' meaning knowledge and 'poot' is document (J.P. Wade, *An Account of Assam*, ed. B. Sharma, Assam, 1927, p. i). However, the term 'Rupit' is also used by the British to designate a certain kind of land in Assam. The misuse of many Tai-Ahom words in this buranji suggests that the scribe was probably illiterate in the language and worked on the advise of another person whose knowledge of the Tai-Ahom language was likewise limited.
4. The Indian concept of the beginning and end is expressed in Yuga. The Time of Origin, Sacred Time, or Great Time is the 'receptacle' for a new creation after an end or *pralaya*. The Indian cyclic concept of continuous change is like the wheel or chakra-the perfect shape with the focal point of the universe situated at its centre in mysterious stillness.
5. Hindu god of creation.

Inside it were humans which sprung out from the fruit. They knew nothing, they were more like beasts. In order to civilize these creatures, Lord Indra[6] sent Nangkun[7] to them. They became his subjects. Satya Yuga ended in peace. They all lived in the same place like members of one big family. 2

In Trata yuga there was discord. The strong began to oppress the weak. Indra prayed for peace. He also sent his two grandsons. They brought along with them a huge shield, Shiva's trident, rhinoceros' horn, rules and regulations, punishment, an umbrella, a yak tail, a high platform, silver mats, and golden mats. They came down on a golden ladder. In this way, Indra sent his two grandsons, Khun Lung and Khun Lai[8] to earth. They descended in Mung Ri Mung Ram.[9] Mathura[10] is known as Mung Ri Mung Ram. But there was an argument. Khun Lung went back to heaven. Khun Lai stayed on earth. 3

His progeny inhabited the earth. After eleven generations, a Naga[11] slave, Meta, drove them away and became king. In that period the populace suffered a lot. The pandits consulted the chicken legs to see what lay in store for the future.[12] They said, 'An ordinary man has become king and the kingdom is in misery.' The elders conferred and decided to offer the throne to a progeny of Khun Lung. The Naga slave was killed. The country was prosperous again. Khun Lung's progeny ruled the kingdom. The king ruled

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6. The king of Hindu gods. In Rigveda he is represented as the Absolute Self. Due to illusion or Maya he can take various forms and shapes.
7. A Tai-Ahom godling.
8. The two divine godsons who are the progenitors of the Tai-Ahoms of Assam.
9. Mung Ri Mung Ram is sometimes represented in the Burmese Annals as three cities, Mung La, Mung Hi and Mung Ham. They were the chief cities of the mighty Mungmao kingdom.
10. Should we read this as the mythical birthplace of lord Krishna? Or is it the modern day Mathurapur in Sibsagar district? According to the buranji called *Ahomar Din*, Saumar or upper Assam is the birthplace of Khunlung and Khunlai. Hence the coronation of the Tai-Ahom kings was done in Charaideo, the vast necropolis of the Tai-Ahom royalty. (See, File B2/E-PCF-16 in S.K. Bhuyan Library, Guwahati, Assam).
11. A tribe inhabiting the mountainous tracts in upper Assam and western Burma. Naga is derived from 'nok' meaning 'people' or 'hill men'. They have no relation to the Indian serpent worship.
12. In Tai-Ahom this practice is called *Kaisengmung*. The Tai-Ahoms have some special texts which describe the various positions of the chicken legs and their meanings. I have seen an ancient Kaisengmung text in the possession of Thanu Deodhai Barua, Principal Town High School, Sibsagar, Assam.

according to the dictates of religion. In this manner his successors also ruled the kingdom. Four thousand two hundred years of the Kali Yuga had transpired. 4

The Nara[13] king's sister, Nangnaam was his wife. She was expecting a child. He sent her back to her father's house. Sukh Rang Pha was born in his grandfather's house. 5

Another sister had a son named Sukapha. He said, 'Two tigers cannot live in one den. Two elephants cannot stay in one stable. Two kings should not stay in the same kingdom. Hence, I would like to go to the southern region. You be the king here.' To this Sukh Rang Pha replied, 'Very well, you may go. But send me tribute every year.' He gave him nine thousand men, a lot of jewellry, bows and arrows, spears, one male and a female elephant, a trainer for the elephants and thirty horses with blinders. 6

A stone icon of Somdeo[14] was made for Sukapha. Somdeo, was the god of wealth, prosperity and knowledge. The goddess Lakshmi resides within. Sukh Rang Pha bade goodbye to Sukapha. He said, 'Don't forget me. Brother, now get on your way.' The icon of Somdeo was suspended and carried along. That year Sukapha turned twenty years old. It was lakli Khutmi.[15] 7

In that year, Somdeo had to be worshipped. They (the Naras) found that the icon was missing. They realized that Sukapha had taken it with him. The king sent his men to bring back the icon. They gave battle to Sukapha's men. But they were defeated and had to return. The migrating group (under Sukapha) on their way, captured many villages and got a lot of booty. The resisting men were killed and their brethrens were forced to eat human flesh. 8

He crossed the Namkiu lake[16] and arrived at Khamjang. There he counted his people. Sixty had died, seven were lost. Rajadeo

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13. The Tai-Ahom claim their royal ancestry from the Naras. This is probably an Assamese name since no such kingdom is referred to in the Burmese Annals. It is popularly held by the Tai peoples in Assam that Nara should be read as Nala since 'r' is sometimes pronounced as 'Nala' in the Tai language. In oral tradition this kingdom is said to be in the Hukoong Valley.
14. Somdeo is the Tai-Ahom royal icon. Some believe this icon was a precious gem. Soma-deva in the Hindu belief system is Lord Shiva.
15. The 47th lakli of the Tai-Ahom era. (See, Loti-Amra in *Ahom Lexicons,* ed. B. Barua and N.N. Deodhai Phukan, Guwahati: D.H.A.S. 1991).
16. This lak was the bone of contention when the British government sought to demarcate the boundary between Assam and Burma. (See Governor's Secretariat Confidential File no. 283, Political A. Sept. 1929, Nos. 1-11, State Archives of Assam, Guwahati).

Sukapha said, 'whoever dies, Whomsoever we capture, any conversation that takes place on the way, must be recorded by the pandit.' At Khamjang, Kankhra Mung Barua was appointed to consolidate the territory. Along the way, a number of people were captured and brought along with. They were either Chutias[17], Morans,[18] Barahis[19] - thus the migrating band expanded. 9

They met a huge band of Kacharis.[20] They asked them, 'Where are you from?' The Kacharis replied, 'Our ancestors have said that our king was fascinated by Mohongar and decided to stay there. Now our king has no kingdom, where will we go?' Our men asked, 'Why did your king leave Mohongar?' They replied, 'The Nagas claimed it as theirs, the Kachari king claimed it as his. Thus a dispute arose. The Nagas suggested a test to determine the right of either group. 'Whosoever manages to split a rock in one blow, tear the bull's horns and uproot the cane plant at once should have the kingdom. If both groups succeed or either fail, we will share the territory.' The very next day the Nagas performed the feat. The Nagas drove the Kacharis away. The Kachari king left the territory and is now settled by the bank of the Dikhou river. His grandson has become king of the Kacharis.' Our men asked, 'How did your king bring the bull's horns?' The Kacharis replied, 'He wrapped it in leaves and carried it.' On hearing this the Ahoms said 'Now we understand'. Sawphunge said, 'We will also drive him away'. 10

The Kacharis were taken along to Tipam, Namrup,[21] and to all other places that we toured, both north and south. According to the

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17. The Chutias were a powerful ruling community in the upper Lauhitya valley with their capital at Sadiya. The Tai-Ahoms referred to them as Mungtiula. The Chutiā kingdom was annexed by the Tai-Ahoms in the early fifteenth century. Presently the Chutias have four groups - the Ahom-Chutia, Hindu-Chutia, Deuri-Chutia and Barahi-Chutia.
18. An autochthonous group. They are sometimes classified as a sub-group of the Bodo tribe. Some say they are Tai who had migrated much earlier and intermingled with the local populace.
19. Literally 'the eater of pigs'. They are also considered an autochthonous group of the upper Lauhitya valley.
20. The Kacharis trace their origin from the mythical demon-goddess Hirimba. Their king was referred to as Hirimbeshwar. The royal capital of the Kacharis was Hirimbapur, presently known as Dimapur. (See *Kachari Rajar Vamsavali*, Ms. 149, Guwahati : D.H.A.S.)
21. Tipam and Namrup are in the modern district of Tinsukia in upper Assam. In Tai, 'Nam' means water. 'Rup' or 'rupa' is a Sanskrit term meaning 'likeness' or 'image'. 'Rup' could be a corruption of the Tai term 'hup' meaning 'to gather'. It was a place where a watery pool had formed.

landscape of the region the place was named. Some places were given more than one name in keeping with its natural formation and other attributes. Thus the emigres whiled away their time and made merry. Those peoples who assisted in the migration process were given names and positions commiserate to their services. 11

The Chutias, Morans, Barahis whom they met on their way were given names according to the task they performed. During their migration they found physical comfort in these people. Women were introduced in their band. The sons and daughters born from these relationships became friends. In the early stages of their migration there was no woman. Now women formed part of the community. 12

From Tipam, they crossed Dihing, Dikhou and came to the banks of Dilihmukh.[22] On inspecting the area they found some desolate houses without any inhabitants. After combing the forest they found one person who could give them some information. He said, 'In the south there are the Kacharis, in the north are the Barahi Morans.' From there they moved to Simoluguri.[23] Some men were deputed to find out the situation in the region. They pretended that they have come to buy alcohol and pigs. The Barahais, Kacharis and Morans said, 'We are one, we live together'. This was reported to Sukapha. The total strength of the allied group was four thousand men. The Kacharis had special power, gifted to them by some supernatural force. On learning this, they agreed that the Kacharis should be subdued. Others said 'lets get the Morans first'. But Sukapha said, 'If we fight, both the parties will loose men. We have left our men in strategic spots to watch the fields'. 13

The Raja said, 'We will send emissaries to them. Let both the parties meet. We have come from up-country. We want to be friends. The others are scattered mountain people, we are guests. Let us get acquainted with the villages and the inhabitants'. The envoys conveyed this message. The other party also listened to this with patience. The messengers said, 'Our leader is the grandson of Swargadeo in heaven. Since he found out that there is no king in

22. Names of rivers. Dilihmukh is in the modern district of Sibsagar.
23. Simolu (Bombax malabaricum) is a kind of a cotton plant which grows in India. This place was a Simolu grove, not far away from Dilihmukh.

this country, he came down on a golden ladder. Hence he is looking around for the kingdom he was sent to rule'. The Barahis and the Morans after hearing this came to see the wonder among men. The horses and elephants were all gathered together. So were the people. The king took them aside and had a talk with the visitors. One of them said, 'They call me Thamithuma. I am the leader of the Morans. My house is by the lake Lakhai'. 14

Our king asked, 'Where did these Kacharis come from? Where were they earlier?' They informed him that since the Nagas drove the Kacharis away they moved with their king and settled by the river bank. 'The Simolu tree demarcates his settlement'. Our men created fear in the Kacharis by warning them that an eel will eat them all. Further, they told them that the spirits have informed that they will be massacred and pulped to death. On hearing this, the Kachari king decided to move away from the bank of the Dikhou river. 15

Our king, then asked, 'where will be a good place for us to live?' Thamithuma said, 'Our king has a Deoghar.[24] That will be a good place to live in'. A few men were sent to check the place. The Moran chief received them with kindness and told them that they could come and go as they pleased. Our men came back and verified that the place was good for settlement. Having enjoyed the returns of the harvest the king remained in this settlement, near the abode of Nangkurideva.[25] This was in lakli Mungmaw.[26] 16

After an extended discussion, the Barahis agreed to supply us with firewood. They said, 'These people are not simply anybody. They are heavenly creatures. Their physical attributes say so. They have no parallel. They cannot be compared to others.' Thus a relationship was formed between the newly arrived peoples and the Barahis. The Morans also provided firewood to the Ahoms. Thus, these new people came to be known as Ahom. 17

Four of the Barahi-Moran princesses were taken in marriage by the king. He deputed an officer to keep him informed of what the Barahis and the Morans were talking about them (the Ahoms).

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24. Literally 'the house of the spirit'.
25. The Hindu analogy is lord Shiva.
26. The fourth year of the Tai-Ahom era.

The Morans said nothing. But the Barahis complained that the new people did not know how to cook. Thereupon, the king called the Barahi princess to cook a meal for him. He liked the food. He ordered that a Barahi should be hired as his cook. The princess recruited a Changmai for the purpose. From then on the Barahis came to be know as Changmai. 18

When the Morans and the Barahis came to deliver firewood, the Morans conducted themselves well, while the Barahis were careless in their bearing. The king ordered that the Morans should leave the premise soon after delivering the firewood. He told the Barahis, 'If I catch you once again letting down your garments I will cut the edge of your garment.' The Morans obeyed the king's order, but the Barahis refused. It was ordered that if ever again the Barahis were found to be carelessly dressed, the border of their garment should be trimmed. In this way the Barahis were subdued and so were the Nagas. 19

After this the king sent out a stripped horse across the country.[27] In the temples of the Morans and the Barahis sacrifices were offered by the Ahoms. The spirits were also appeased. Thus he took over the place and the political structure. He had two sons and one daughter. Thereafter, he ruled for thirty three years. He died in lakli Khutsan.[28] 20

After Sukapha, his able son, Sutawpha, became king. News of the succession was sent to the kingdom of Sukh Rang Pha. Sukh Rang Pha sent a cap made of silver and gold and two *karphai*[29] bows and arrows. Having received the sanction from the parent kingdom, Sutawpha sent his men to the Kachari king, to declare, 'This is my kingdom. Move away. Why are these people digging ponds and constructing houses in my land? If, however, they want to carry on these activities they should pay me tribute.' The Ka-charis replied, 'This is all big talk. We have been living here for three generations now. Nobody has claimed this area before, now what gives you the right to make this claim?' Our men said, 'If you can dig all the way to the Dikhou before the break of dawn then you can claim this as your kingdom.' The Kachari chief said, 'We will do it today itself.

27. The description bears likeness to the *Asvamedha* ritual.
28. The fifty seventh year of the Tai-Ahom era.
29. A Long bow.

Wait and see. If we fail, than you can claim this as your kingdom. But if I can dig as far as the river before dawn it will be my rule.' Our king told his men, 'Take as many roosters as you can and stay in the forest for the night.' By the time the Kacharis made fair progress it was midnight. Our men feared that the Kacharis will finish their assignment on time. They set the roosters free and they started crowing. It was a moonlit night and the Kacharis thought it was dawn. Thus we established our rule in the territory. The Kacharis left and settled in Saring. So too the Nagas had to move. He died in lakli Taosingha[30] after ruling for thirteen years. 21

His son Subinpha became the next king. In his reign the population was regulated. The two Gohains[31] were asked to divide the people into two groups. The king ordered that they should work for him for one or two days. According to this arrangement a few useless captives were put in a group with a few free men. These rules were established now. One day, finding that the supply of labour in the royal fields was insufficient, the king reprimanded the Bura Gohain. This hurt the Bura Gohain and he left the kingdom. He could not be traced again. 22

One day three elephants were caught in Tingrai.[32] One of them was given to the Bar Gohain and the other two the king kept for himself. For the kings elephants, the Bora-Bura[33] had to bring in the fodder. For the Bar Gohain's elephant, Ahoms were assigned to bring in the fodder. If they felt like they did so, otherwise not. The Bar Gohain himself cut the grass and brought it. One stormy day, the Bar Gohain was hurt while cutting grass for his elephant. Hence, the very next day he went to the king and said that he did not want the elephant, nor did he want to be the Bar Gohain. At that time Sawkang Banduk asked the king to let him have the elephant and make him the Bar Gohain. He had seven sons and hence seven daughters-in-law who could together take care of the elephant. Therefore the king made Sawkang Banduk his Bar Gohain. 23

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30. This lakli is not known. Taosingha is the sixty year cycle and does not denote a specific year.
31. The *Bura Gohain* and the *Bar Gohain*
32. A place near Namrup.
33. An official in the early Tai-Ahom administration.

One day, the king crossed the Dikhou river and went on a hunting trip. The king had taken a huge band of people with him. On that occasion the Nagas came out of the forests and attacked our men. Thau Mung Tew attacked the king with his sword. The Nagas stood and watched this. Then, they attacked the other people in the group. The king said, 'A captive Naga is like a tiger, better to kill them.' That place and the people were named as Tang-su, meaning Tang - tiger, and Su - chase, therefore, chasing tiger or Naga.[34] The king did not continue the hunt but returned to his capital. The Nagas continued to fight among themselves. Subinpha ruled for twelve years. He died in lakli Tapra.[35] 24

His son Sukhrangpha became king. He ruled for only a year and died in lakli Khutmi. 25

Tyao Sukanpha ascended to the throne. In his reign, our king contracted a marriage alliance with the kingdom of Kamata,[36] whereby, the king married two princesses from Kamata. He reigned for thirty two years. He died in lakli Plakkni.[37] 26

For five years there was no political order in the kingdom. The populace consulted and offered the throne to Sutawpha who belonged to Lahnoji village. He reigned for three years and died in lakli Khutngi.[38] 27

Thereafter, Tyaopha-Khyatmathi became king. There was chaos and disorder in the country. There was an excess of maidens. The king could not control his passion. He would give away land to acquire any maiden that took his fancy. There was utter chaos, yet, no one dared to question the king for his despicable behaviour. The people met to discuss the situation in lakli Kamao.[39] This king ruled for thirteen years. 28

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34. In Tai-Ahom 'Su' denotes tiger. In the buranji the word order is jumbled.
35. No such lakli is mentioned in the Tai-Ahom lexicon. Both, Daprao which is the twenty second year, and Katrao which is the forty sixth year, bears resemblance to Tapra. It cannot be ascertained which was actually intended.
36. Kamata was the dominant kingdom in western Assam.
37. The fifteenth lakli year.
38. The twenty seventh year.
39. The fortieth year.

His brother, Susang was in Bokota.[40] The people approached him with a request to be their king. When the Gohain saw the crowd of people approaching he asked, 'Why are you all here?' They replied, 'Unable to bear the atrocities of your brother we have all consulted and are here to select you as our king.' Susang replied, 'You people will do the same to me. I cannot be your king.' They promised, 'We will not do so. We give you our solemn promise. You also make a promise to us that you will not do as your brother did.' 'Very well', said the king. To cement the promise they dug a pond with spears and slaughtered cows and pigs in it. Then they immersed their hands and took an oath. That place came to be called Hapatkaria[41] after the promise was made. 29

Susang became king. That year the Morans supplied firewood. One day a scuffle occurred between a Moran and the Changmai. The Moran drew out a hengdan.[42] When the elders saw this they asked, 'Where did you get this hengdan?' He replied, 'This belonged to my father.' They asked, 'Where is your father?' He replied, 'My father is dead, but my mother is alive.' When questioned, she said, 'An unknown man had come to me. His son is this boy. At the time of his death he gave the hengdan to his son and said, "never leave this hengdan. There are men who will recognize the king's hengdan".' On hearing this, they realized that this man was the son of the lost Bura Gohain and took him to the king. 30

In that year Rajani Kunwari's son, Saring Raja Tasulai, Thao Mung Lung Bar Gohain, Tamera - these three men went to Bengal. But the king recalled them and had them killed. Susengpha lost his kingship. His reign was for thirteen years. He died in lakli Kapsan.[43] 31

This time there was anarchy for nine years. Khuntai wanted to become king. but no one would acknowledge him as the king. Around that time, Khaawmung Sangkham went north to buy cows.

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40. Presently a village in the Sibsagar district. It has a concentration of the Tai-Ahom priestly families - the deodhai, mohun and bailung. Near Bokota is another village called Patsako. Both these villages are the strongholds of the Tai-Ahom revival movement in Assam.
41. 'Hapat' is an Assamese term for 'promise'. Literally 'the place where a promise was made'.
42. Hengdan is the Tai-Ahom sword of honour.
43. The twenty first year.

He met Suhan and from his conversation found that he was of noble birth. He brought this news to the people who agreed that he should be their king. However, Suhan replied that only if the populace agreed to receive the other sons of the brahman and his foster father, he will be their king. The seven sons of the brahman were welcome with presents of elephants and horses. From then on he came to be known as Brahman Kunwar. The seven brahmans were posted in different places. The brahman posted on the upper extreme of the kingdom came to be called Upar Konwar, the one on the south end was known as Dakhin Konwar, and so on. 32

Susengpha married off his three daughters. One to Tikhrang and another to Thaotan's brother. Tusalai wanted to marry the king's daughter, Nangseng. The king was not in favour. Tusalai fled and went to Kamatapur. That year, the king of Kamatapur wanted to invade Gaur and requested our king to send some of his men for the expedition. He also asked for a daughter. That year, our king defeated the Bengalis. He died in lakli Rangraw,[44] after ruling for fifteen years. 33

Tyaopha-Suphak ascended to the throne. One day the Akhaampha Nagas came and slaughtered a great many of our people. The king was also hurt. Tyaopha ruled for eighteen years and died in lakli Kasau.[45] 34

Thereupon, Suhan became king. He built his house in Tangsoo and despatched Phulungkhampeng to fight the Kacharis. The Kacharis defeated them and chased them to the bank of the Dikhou. Phulungkhampeng managed to cross the river on an elephant. The Ahoms sent a girl named Nanji and an elephant to the Kacharis. 35

Raja Suhan was killed by one of the four sons of Thaobondu, Lantaruban. He ruled for four years and died in lakli Mungkaut.[46] 36

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44. The fifty eighth year.
45. The sixth year of the era.
46. No such lakli year is noted in the lexicon. But mention is made to laklis Hung-nao, Mung-keo, Mung-nao Mung-meet and Mung-ceu. chronologically for our purposes Mung-mao is the correct lakli. It follows Kasau or Ka-Keo - the 60th lakli year, which completes one era.

His son, Tyao Suhan, became the Maharaja. Sauphrang was killed. Khuntai was also imprisoned. In a battle against the Tangsoo Nagas, Saukang was taken captive. His son, Kanonrak was sent to fight. But he hid himself. For this offence, Nanrak's son was demoted. 37

Once the king was out hunting. A Naga saw him. The king sent a maiden to the Nagas. Later the king heard from another princess that his wife, who was gifted to the Nagas was pregnant. The king was upset. When he heard that the princess gave birth to a boy he asked that his son should be returned. He brought him up as his adopted son. And so he died. 39

His son was Kangseng. One day he said, 'The two Gohains are like the two pillars of support of the kingdom. The king is the gold plate on the top. But we still need another pillar for support.' Finally, the Barahis, Chutias, and the other captives were put together and a Tyao Kunwar[47] was placed over them. Thus the three supports or pillars were founded. 40

The king ordered that all the sons and grandsons of the former chiefs should be brought to his presence. Each of them was given an unit to command. He forbade them to quarrel amongst themselves. He warned them that if he ever found anyone fighting or abusing each other, he would kill him. Those that were born out of wedlock were designated as Handique.[48] They could not become princes. That would be their proof of birth. These men could socialize with the Ahoms. The Ahoms could eat from their plates. In turn, the Ahoms were ordered not to abuse or ridicule the Handiques. Further, it was stipulated that the sons of the two Gohains could marry the daughters of the king. The Gohains could also marry their daughters to the king. However, the daughter of the Bar Patra Gohain could not marry the king nor could he marry the king's daughter. 41

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47. This is commonly referred to as the *Bar-Patra Gohain*. He was the third royal minister, besides the *Bar Gohain* and the *Bura Gohain*.
48. Oral account has it that the Handiques were one of the seven clan members who accompanied Sukapa to the Lauhitya valley. In time, a number of people either received the title or incorporated themselves to the clan called Handique. The original families are hard to trace.

In lakli Dhaksau,[49] the Chutias came to give battle to us by the banks of the Dikhou. Our men fought against them at Sadiya. The Chutias sent their men, saying, 'We surrender, do not move any further.' Our men replied, 'Send us a gold cat, golden present and the gold tooth. We will then forgive you.' In return, the Chutias sent golden bangles, earrings, and a kamarbandh to the king and his chief ministers. The kamarbandh sent to the Bura Gohain had a knife hidden in its folds. This was shown to the king. Once again, our men attacked the Chutias who fled to the Chandragiri hills. But it was a difficult terrain to overcome. Their king shot an arrow at Phajangmu. They beheaded Sundang Sebasang Saikia and took back his head. Jangmung beheaded the chief Chutia princess and brought her head to the assembly. Our king sent everything he found in the Chutia village by boat. The king came back with Phrasengmung. 42

The Ahoms captured thirty elephants, sixty horses, seventy five muskets, war armour, the royal-umbrella, the royal chair, the royal dress, spittoon, cows, buffaloes and a variety of other articles. They captured many brahmans, astrologers, masons and artisans in this battle. 43

One day, the Barahis brought a cage full of small birds for the king. This cage was a two layered structure. The king liked it and asked his masons to copy the design and build houses in that style.[50] He liked what he saw. Thereupon, he forbade further construction of the same kind of houses by others. 44

The two sisters of the king were given in marriage, one to Phrasong and the other to Sunghan. The king's daughter, Mungkhe, Khrimor's daughter and Kanmung's daughter were dedicated to serve in the temple of the goddess. In Sadiya, the Naras started to create problems. But they retreated. They came to pay respect to the king. 45

Our king received them with kindness and gifted a daughter, too. The Barahis whom Sukapha had met, Thamithuma,

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49. Dapceu is the forty second year. Probably, the scribe meant Dapeeu, since Dhaksau is not known in the Tai-Ahom system.
50. These are the stilt houses which are commonly seen in South-East Asia, and northeast India. In Assam this type of dwelling is referred to as 'Chang ghar'. Nowadays, the Tai-Ahoms construct ground level houses or 'mati ghar'.

Thakunath, Thakunkhun, now their grand-children were deputed in different areas like Sargurwa, Dihing, Jaji, Bhagsaw, etc. These four were named as Chutia.[51] The commoners among the Barahis, Chutias, Morans and Kacharis from then on were called Chetia. However, the new Chutias were not called Ahoms. Because of centuries of inter-marriage and social interaction with the local peoples many Ahoms had lost their heritage.[52] But the remaining Ahoms who could not be accounted were identified and this status quo was sought to be maintained. 46

The Bar Gohain was deputed to stay in the Chutia settlement to administer the peoples and the territory. The people of Sadiya accepted the Bar Gohain as their king. On hearing this, the king recalled the Bar Gohain to the capital. But he refused to come. The Bura Gohain was then sent to Sadiya. The Bar Gohain was captured and brought back to the Ahom capital in a boat. He came and paid homage to the king. The king reprimanded him. From that day onwards the Bura Gohain was assigned the responsibility and returns of Sadiya. 47

The Kacharis settled in the village of Deogaon.[53] The Ahoms resisted this. They said, 'Tonight whosoever manages to dig a pond which is nine feet deep will have the territory'.[54] The Kacharis agreed and both the parties started digging. The Kacharis dug until evening and left. The Ahoms did not. At night they brought a great deal of mud and filled the Kachari pond. The next morning both parties came to inspect. There was no water left in the Kachari pond. The pond dug by the Ahoms was filled with water. The Kacharis had to retreat from the village after making due payment of gold and silver articles to the Ahoms. The Ahom king, Suhumpha, fought against the Kacharis many times and finally

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51. The designation was administrative and probably was not the same as the namesake political group of Chutias.
52. It is interesting to note that as early as the fifteenth century the Tai Ahoms supposedly lost their original culture and traditions. Presently, the Tai-Ahom revival movement is seeking to re-find the 'lost' Tai culture.
53. Deogaon is also known as Devargaon or Daergaon.
54. It is held that the Tai-Ahoms learnt the art and technique of digging ponds from the Kacharis. The Kacharis dug ponds for a variety of purposes, most significantly for royal baths with separate arrangements for the king, queen, princes and princesses. Also ponds were used for supplying public drinking and bathing water, as well, for temple activities. (For details, see *Kachari Rajar Vamsavali*, Ms. 149, D.H.A.S)

caught the Seng king, Khunkhar. He brought with him elephants, horses, and silver as the payment of tribute to the Ahom king. The king asked him not to get angry. As a mark of friendship, the king presented him with a ring.[55] The king said, 'From now on the stipulation is that five of your workers must be sent here. Send me twenty horses, three to the Bura Gohain and one to Moringikhuwa'. 48

Forests were cleared. A good deal of people were brought under Ahom control. Bhuyans[56] were deputed over these people and they were settled in different places. 49

After building the fortress, the king looked north and south to find out which new territory he could conquer. At this time Vishwa Singha attacked our kingdom. He was pushed back and the boundary was fixed at Kajali in the north and in the south Barnadi demarcated his kingdom. The Gariyas were defeated at Hajo and pushed back to Ghura Ghat, where a big battle was fought. This battle lasted for seven days and seven nights. The Bengalis fled to the Karatoya river.[57]

While they encamped there, they dug a lake. The Gaur king was informed of the enemy encampment. Some of our men went to the Gaur king asking him to bring whatever he could to them. The king sent his brother with a thousand silver coins, thirty horses, sixty two muskets which our king demanded that they remit every year. Our men lived in that area for six months. They dug a pond and constructed a temple. In keeping with the Ahom tradition they sacrificed some cows and buffaloes. Also they built a road to Kamarupa. The pond on the bank of the Karotoya was earmarked with a golden pillar. On it was inscribed, 'Anyone who claims this territory as his without giving battle is cursed to loose his parents and his ancestors to hell. A sweeper can beat such a coward and he

55. The information is corraborated by the *Kachari Rajar Vamsavali*.
56. Twelve Bhuyans or Bara Bhuyans ruled the kingdom which was bounded in the north by mountains, towards the south was the river Brahmaptura, east was the Sisi river and on the west was Gang Bihali. Their domain was the region between the Bharali and the Subansiri rivers. To their west were the Chutias and to the extreme west was the kingdom of Kamata.
57. The river was fixed as the western limit of the kingdom.

should dress in woman's clothing'.[58] This was informed to the king of Gaur. 50

The Bhuyans surrounded the Raja of Gandh, Santan and Thanga. For six months they went back and forth. They encamped for four months in the northern section of the kingdom where they dug a pond. At Dihing they constructed a temple. They built a town in Haldibari. The Bhuyans came occasionally to report to the king. The brahmans were not too happy, but the king enjoyed their dispute. We did not have musket earlier. We did not know its use until we learnt it from the Bhuyans. We had karphai bows and arrows. The Chutias had Chutiabows. When four were joined together, the total length was four feet. These came to be called Bordhenu.[59] The king used to shoot these and derive a great deal of pleasure. The king set up a plan to let the brahmans debate with the Bhuyans. They spoke of royal rights and duties - of Ganga, and Jaganatha.[60] 51

The two daughters of the king were married to the son and grandson of the Bar Gohain and the Bura Gohain, respectively. The Bura Gohain resisted this since he considered it bad, but the king compelled him to. Another daughter was married off to Tangsu Handique. One day the king went for a visit to Garhgaon and left his son-in-law in charge. In the meanwhile, the Crown Prince came to visit the king. But seeing that the young Gohain was in charge he did not pay his respects to him and left. The king was very angry at this. 52

That year the king of Bengal sent a nawab called Turbak. Our king sent his men to fight the invader. But they lost a lot of men and ammunition. Bar Gohain Phrasengmung was killed in battle, so too Thawmungkingtham. They lost twenty lancers. They retreated. Ton Kham was appointed as the Bar Gohain. The Ahoms withdrew their boats and soldiers. The king ordered the Garhgaonyan Raja to

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58. No evidence remains of this structure. Near Guwahati, in Bejara is the temple of Pingalesvara. Some attribute the temple to Swarganarayana or king Suhungmung. An inscription found in the temple reads, 'Sri Sri Svarganarayan nripasya ra jatva-varse biyallisanke Pingalasya'. (See, P.C. Choudhury, 'Archaeological Ruins of Pinglesvara Temple' in the *Journal of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti* (from now on JKAS), vol. xxii, 1974, pp. 49-52).
59. Long arrows.
60. Hindu religion.

advance his forces and pursue the enemy. They advanced with their naval fleet. The navy was directed to attack from both directions and in this way the enemy line was broken. The enemy retreated. They lost many men. Our army returned to Dihing. The Garhgaonyan Raja was left behind. 53

To establish peace, Turbak decided to give his daughter in marriage to our king. A quarrel between father and son ensued over this woman. After consulting with many others, both father and son made a solemn promise by immersing their hands in the Dihing river that they will not give up the fight.[61] The Bar Patra Gohain was given a Tamuli princess. The Bar Gohain was sent to fetch the Crown Prince, who refused to pay visit to the king. The king ordered that the boundary should be drawn up to keep the Nagas out of his territory. On digging a trench they found a man. He came out like a ghost. On surfacing to the ground he asked, 'Why did you pull me out?' Further, he asked, 'in which direction does the Lohit flow?' The Ahoms replied, 'Towards the northern mountain'. The man replied, 'It is Kali yuga. Put me back in the ground'. They did so but reported it to the king. On making inquires, the king asked them to stop the construction of the fort. The hill came to be known as Deva hills. On its foothills Khunt raja was buried. 54

One day, the king went to the city of Kasi. On his way to celebrate a successful deer hunt, he stopped to fish in the Lohit. But in the process, he intruded into the underwater kingdom of the Lohit king. Our king sent his men requesting for the release of his net and his fishing attendant. Sufficiently placated, the Lohit king released the net and the attendant. Around that time the two daughters of the king were quarreling over a golden comb. One of them threw the comb at the Bar Patra and said 'You may have this'. On asking what he should do with it, the king replied, 'If you have this you will be endowed with abundant wealth and spiritual powers'. When the Bar Patra came back to the surface the Ahom king asked him, 'What did you see underwater?' He narrated all that he saw and as evidence produced the golden comb. The king asked, 'Who have they given this to? To you or me?' He said, 'Well

61. The Shans of Burma have a similar custom whereby participants make their pledges by immersing their hands in water. (See Leslie Milne, *Shans at Home*, London: John Murray, 1905).

it was given to me, but you can have it'. The king replied 'To whom it was given gets to keep it'. 55

In that year, they harvested rice from the fields.[62] There was abundant production. It was a year of plenty for the kingdom. The king moved from there to Dihing. He sent the Crown Prince's mother with the promise to persuade her son to come to the royal court. But the prince did not come. Much angered, the king decided to attack him. The Crown Prince came to the vicinity of Jaranga, but had to retreat to the Dikhou. Finding that he could not stay there for long, he sent the princess away. The king found out that the princess had left on learning of his arrival. Saddened, the king left for Dihing once again. The Crown Prince sent his men to the Kachari princes requesting for help to assassinate his father, the king. He promised suitable reward for their help. One brother was dressed up as a women and sent to kill the king. King Suhungpha was killed in lakli Kamao after ruling for fifty three years. 56

The place where father and son had their fight is called as Ronsenkam. Where the son managed to press the father into a corner, that area came to be called Sepon. The Crown Prince ascended to the throne and became Swargaraja. The brother of the Kachari princess, Ratmal Dhan, who had helped in the assassination of king Suhungpha was buried in a pit filled with thorns. When the other five brothers, the prince of Namrup, Tipam, Mohingya, Saring, and Dub heard of their father's death in the hands of their brother, the Crown Prince, they joined their forces and decided to fight the new king. The king also gathered his men and pursued the enemy to the banks of the Diboru. He surrounded the five brothers and captured them. He had them killed and buried them by the banks of the Dijaw river. On ascending to the throne he took the name Suklengmung. 57

The Dikhou river was fixed as the eastern boundary line. A fort was constructed to enclose the town. However, one household could not be removed from the settlement. This man was known as Hemana and was the grandson of Kayangthawmung. He did not care much for the king's order. He claimed that his land was well

62. This is one of the few direct evidences we have about rice cultivation in the Lauhitya valley.

demarcated and not even the king could claim it for his own. Due to this reason the lower end of the fort was not completed at this time. After his death the fort was completed. For this reason it is to this day that the area is known as Hemanabari. The king designated it as Garhgram.[63] The fort had four doors as gateways. 58

In that year some of the forests were cleared after killing some Banpha Nagas. Ten scores of men cleared a patch at a time. However, they felt that it was unfair on the part of the king to dislodge them and send them to the forest to make a living for themselves. The king reasoned that they had to work hard to get rewards and this endeavour would fetch their children and grand-children abundant land. The Nagas were killed and Sungdang was given the land south of the Dikhou. He was also given a large force of men to clear the forest. In the skirmish that ensued on the northern banks of the Dikhou, we lost many of our men. The Sungdang Barbora was killed. Tansu Handique was made the Barbora. The king ordered that garrisons should be stationed on the banks of the Dikhou. According to the rules of the Dihing area, a market place was established there.[64] 59

The Tongsu Barbora was ex-communicated from royal privileges. The reason for this was that the daughter of the Dihing chief adopted a Bantun Naga boy. She had a son of her own, too. When the son-in-law (her husband) died, the adopted Naga boy was not given his share of inheritance. He went and reported this to the Garhgaonyan king. The king ordered Tongsu Barbora to give the boy his share of property since he was raised by his sister. Nevertheless, the Barbora refused saying that he would not acknowledge the Naga as his equal in position and allow him to partake what is rightfully only his due. Angered, the king cursed him that he would never have his own progeny. Thereafter, he was demoted. Tungsu Naga was given some land and recognized as a member of the family 60

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63. It was the capital city of Garhgaon, referred to in this buranji as Garhgram.
64. Situated in the foothills of Namrup, it connects the Dihing area with Sadiya. On one hand, it was the passageway for trade with and from Tibet. On the other side were the Naga hills probably used as the transit point by traders of upper Burma.

Those areas that were cleared for habitation had to pay a tax fixed at one fourth of the produce. In this way an income was stipulated for the kingdom and this forced the residents of the locality to work for a living. Their tasks were also regulated. The Ahoms themselves cultivated in some parts and in some they did not. The new inhabitants living in the cleared areas did whatever they pleased. And so these regulations had to be formulated. Garhgaonyan Raja's rule lasted for ten years. He died in lakli Mungmaw. 61

Then his son Subinpha became king. Three years later, the Nara king entered our kingdom. The reasons for this were many. Having lost a battle in Mantora,[65] he came to our king to make an alliance which was to be cemented by giving the sister of our king in marriage to the Nara king. Our king did not comply with this request. He sent a gift of horses and elephants, slaves and concubines to the Nara king. In the meantime, the Nara king sent one of the princes to our kingdom to kill our king. One of those men divulged the secret plan to the king, and he was suitably rewarded. In the meantime, the Nara king sent a message saying that he was keen to visit his brother, the Ahom king. But he had three Ahom men killed from among those sent to him. One of the captured men fled and reported the real intentions of the Nara king to the Swargadeo. On hearing this the Swargadeo deputed the Bura Gohain to lead our forces against the Nara king. He was killed in battle, and so the Bar Gohain was sent to depute as the commander. However, he decided to acknowledge the Nara king's superiority and refused to fight him. Our king was demoralized and decided to let history take its own course. This gave the Nara king freedom to do as he pleased. After this the Nara king returned to his own kingdom. Later some of our men who were taken as hostages by the Nara army were released and they were brought back by the Bar Gohain. These came to be known as Nara. Along with them came a family of the Nara king. They were called Nara Konwar.[66] 62

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65. It is generally assumed that the people of Burma are the Man people. Curiously however, the people of northern Arunachal Pradesh, of the Tawang area, are also sometimes referred to as Man.
66. Konwar means a prince.

The three daughters of the Bar Gohain - Misay, Saru Misay and Bar Misay dug a pond on the banks of the Jamuna river. In other places, too, they dug more ponds which were donated to gonak brahmans. They also gifted gold and silver, clothes, cowrie and land to the brahmans. Along the Dihing eight atha[67] trees were planted and a watchman was appointed. Hence the place came to be called Athabari.[68] 63

Bar Misay died in lakli Rukaw.[69] She was buried in Halguri. The king's house was burnt down. A new town was established on the banks of the Dihing. That year, Sila Rai led an army against us. When our men learnt that Sila Rai was a devout Hindu who would not kill any brahmans, all the inhabitants of our kingdom donned on the holy thread of the brahmans, put tilak on their forehead and rode on cows. In this manner they marched to the battle field. On seeing this band Sila Rai was amazed that the country was filled with brahmans, and considered it sinful to fight them. Therefore, Sila Rai returned to his country without fighting the brahmans. Later, our army captured the retreating Koches and killed many. Even the women hacked the enemy with their axes. Whatever loot they captured, they gave it to the king. After this incident they refused to take off the holy thread. Therefore, there was a huge increase in the number of brahmans. After the lapse of a few years it became difficult to distinguish the fake from the real. They all claimed to be brahmans. It became essential for the king to make some sense out of this. Lakai Barbora was designated to do the task of de-Brahmanizing the fake ones. Those he thought were genuine were to be left in their position. It was not an easy task. In some instances genuine brahmans were de-Brahaminzed, and in others, the fake ones were acknowledged as real brahmans. For this reason the owner of the sacred thread came to be known as Lekai Chetia. This problem received only this much attention. 64

Molo-Huklo learnt that our men had tricked the Koches in the former battle, that none of the soldiers were genuine brahmans. So

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67. Resin plants which produce glue.
68. A village of resin plants.
69. This lakli is probably made up. It is not noted in the Ahom lexicon.

now he advanced to Phulam. This spot is known as Mechghar.[70] At first our forces desisted form fighting the large invading army and ran off to the Saraikhurung hills.[71] But when the enemy army demanded their surrender, they came out to fight. Sungdang's Sersong Kungrong, Nagariya Barua, his brother, Mung Garhgaonan Handique, Phukinmung Kenoy, Tongsu Handique, and Thamungphukinmung died in the battle. Our men fled to the banks of the Dikhou where they killed many Meches. The two armies did not come face to face in any battle, but our army retreated. Molo-Huklo halted in Majuli. From there, he sent his envoy to our camp. The Swargadeo asked, 'What will make your king leave my country and let us be in peace'. He also sent his son along with the envoy. Molo-Huklo demanded that three sons of the Gohains, the youngest son of the Barneog, Sundang's son and the sons of the nobles should also be sent. Only on the fulfillment of this demand they will leave our kingdom. This was fulfilled. Instead of the Bar Gohain's son, the king's brother, Tamulnakhuwa Gohain, was sent. Instead of Sungdang son, his daughter's son was sent. The Koch commander retreated after this. 65

In lakli Kamao, the Bar Gohain's youngest daughter, Harumisaw died. The king requested that the sisters should be buried together in the same burial ground. He also requested that after his death he should be buried between them. In this way Hareumisaw was buried. 66

The Swargadeo sent two men to the Jaiantia Bar Gohain Baga requesting for a princess. They sent back two of their men. Our king received them and after discussing with them sent three men Tai Jin, Tai Takhung and Tataw. The Jaiantia princess, however, was not quite happy in the royal house. One day, she dreamt the Mother Goddess, Durga, who asked her to tell the king to build a house for her since she had come from the Jaiantia kingdom along with the princess at the time of her marriage to the king. The princess

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70. The Mech inhabited the foothills of the Bhutan kingdom. The Koch and Mech are mentioned as the two important groups ruling the north bank of the Brahmaputra in Jujzani's *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* (*Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, 2 vols. transl. by G. Raverty, reprint, New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1970). In this buranji, the terms Koch and Mech are used interchangeably.

71. Also known as Charaideo. The suffix 'deo' is a later addition and is the Assamized form 'deva'. Likewise, Swarganarayan was changed to Swargadeo.

related this strange dream to the king, who then built a house for the goddess on the bank of the Dihing and brought a brahman priest form the Jaiantia kingdom to consecrate the spot. 67

A goldsmith's daughter had come as a maid with the Gohain's eldest daughter, Barmisaw. After her death the goldsmith's daughter served the younger sister. On her death, the goldsmith's daughter was made a princess and as such the goldsmith and his family were very excited. A house was built for them and a pond was endowed to them which made them feel important. The king was also charmed by the maiden. The three Gohains were despatched to perform different tasks. On the southern bank of the Dikhou, towards Haitaguri they dug a pond. A special road was constructed, too. The servants of the princess began to oppress the people of the locality in many ways. 68

Rajkhowa Chetia Nahar was made a prince. He was given the rights of administration and collection of revenue from the northern banks of the Dikhou. There they dug a new pond and roads were built. He was declared the chief of the area. One brahman who was humiliated for not being designated the chief priest in the consecration ceremony cursed the pond and forbade anyone from using it. When many of the inhabitants of the area fell ill the Bar Gohain reported to the king that the prince was unable to administer the area. The chief treated the area as his domain and disregarded the king's rights over it. Since this kind of complaint became more frequent the king finally said, 'Do as you please. Don't come and ask me what to do'. The prince was killed by the Bar Gohain, although, the princess tried to stop this. She was reprimanded by the Bar Gohain. 69

When the king stayed at Saraikhurung he was pleased by the Naga king's hospitality and he said to him, 'You are lame, so am I and so is Lefara Barbora. That is good enough. Hence, I award you a lake, twenty men and twenty hectares of land and a woman.[72] Come and spend sometime each year in this house.' 70

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72. The gifting of women was a Tai-Ahom royal custom. In the partriarchal Tai-Ahom society, the position of women was significantly lower than men. Very few buranjis, if at all, note the activities of the royal women.

The Bar Gohain was sent to catch elephants in the northern forests.[73] But the elephants moved towards the territory of the Bhuyans. For this offence some Bhuyans were killed. A hostage was brought from there. Later he was returned with suitable amount of gifts of silver and cloth. Khuraraja died in lakli Kapsan, after ruling for fifty years. 71

His son, Suseng came to the throne. Immediately, the goldsmith's daughter and her family were all put to death. 72

Thereafter, a thousand men were formed into a cluster and these men were assigned to the nobles of the kingdom.[74] When Lefara Barbora died, Thawmung Tongsu Handique was appointed as the new Barbora. Ten forts were built. Every alternate month a feast was held for the general people.[75] The king himself inspected the forts. The people were classed in various categories. By the Soywanasu,[76] besides the Railung hills, the Naga territory was also annexed and a fort was built to claim the area. 73

Sainiya Handique was assigned Abhayapur.[77] The king sent for the wife of Tungsu Handique. She spoke rudely to the king and reminded him of the promise he had made to her. The Tamuli told the king that she has been trained by her husband to be rude. For

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73. The right of catching and keeping elephants belonged exclusively to the Swargadeo. One method of catching elephants was to trap them in ditches. In upper Assam one can still see a number of hathinalas or ditches used for the transportation of the captive animals. In the Mariani area, near the town of Jorhat, a hathinala demarcates two tea estates - Duklungia from Sykota. According to oral account this ditch originated in the Naga hills and ran through Mariani and beyond. Now only about a kilometer and a half is left of the long stretch. It is a 'V' shaped ditch measuring about twenty four feet in width at the top, while the bottom narrows down to six feet. In depth it is about fourteen feet. It was designed to avoid water logging and thus the trapped animals were easily moved to the capital.
74. The Tai-Ahoms followed the decimal system of assignment. Both civil and military functions were performed by paiks. Twenty were assigned to a Bora, hundred were placed under a Saikia and a thousand under a Hazarika.
75. We do not have details concerning the feast, nor does the scribe provide us with a name for this festival. More research on the Tai-Ahom religion and customs are necessary to enable us to form an outline of their religious system.
76. Nowadays it is known as Subansiri. The Subansiri river flows through the modern state of Arunachal Pradesh.
77. Near Sibsagar, in upper Assam.

this offence Tungsu Handique was stoned and beaten to death at the Ladaigarh fort [78] where he was busy at work. 74

In his place, Hukati Tamuli was made the Barbora. He built an embankment over the Dihing. Ponds were dug in Mesaghar, Taliyadunga and Gaspura. Garhgaon was enclosed with cane palisades and ten doors, of which three had lion emblems.[79] Pleased with his work, the Swargadeo created a new post called Barbarua. 75

Roumoriya Brahman was made the Bhandari Barua. Khatowal Chetia's eldest daughter was gifted Mesaghar and its pond. The Parbatiya Bar Gohains's daughter was married off to the Swargadeo. The Bar Gohain gave his daughter a Chutia slave for her dowry. When she became the Princess of the Parbatiya domain, she made her slave in-charge of the estate. The king, too, was pleased with his behaviour and mannerism and made him the Bhandari Gohain. 76

That year our king sent for a Jaiantia princess. But her father demanded that seven villages must be first given to him.[80] The Swargadeo sent an envoy to the Jaiantia king asking for directions to the territory of Bengal. The Jaiantia king refused. At that point Khamsin Bar Gohain, Lawpet Buragohain, Laku Barpatra, Tipam chief, Saring chief, Sundar Gohain, all of them were sent to the Jaiantia domain to fetch the maiden for the king. The Swargadeo marched to Eeta Garh to kill the Jaiantia king. The ministers who had gone to fetch the princess halted on the banks of the Kuli river. The Kacharis attacked the fort of Eeta Garh and killed many of our men. In that year, Guray Lashkar was removed from his position and the grandson of Laitamung was made in-charge of the fort. 77

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78. In present Jorhat district.
79. No remains have been found of those gates. Modern Garhgaon boasts of a royal palace which was built by Rajeshwar Singha in the late eighteenth century. This is called the Kareng Garh. A large moat surrounds the palace complex. At some point in time the Tai-Ahoms appropriated the lion symbol as its royal emblem. Sutengmnung was the first Tai-Ahom king who used the little singha, meaning the 'lion king'. On his ascension to the throne he took the Hindu name of Pratap Singha. Since then the Tai-Ahom Swargadeos have referred to themselves as Singha.
80. The tradition of bride price continues to be practised among the Tais of Assam, as well as the Jaiantias.

Plarikshit, the grandson of Arjuna, who was the Pandava prince was captured by the king of Bengal. Syed Bababkar was deputed as the Thanadar of Hajo. Two traders were sent to ascertain the developments in Singarit. On hearing this, the Ahom king sent his men to catch the fake traders and kill them.[81] He also ordered that their boats should be seized. One of the traders escaped. He reported the incident to the Nawab at Hajo. The nawab sent for Sattrajit and they raided the nearby villages with their forces. On hearing this, our men decided to give fight to the Bengali army. A pact was made with the Kacharis who were dominating the territory there. The doubts were resolved. Our nobles pitched their tents on the bank of the Bhadori river. But the Bengali army crossed the Bhodori river at the break of dawn and massacred our forces. They could not retaliate effectively and withdrew to Sawdhara. A message was sent to the Swargadeo. On hearing this, the king shouted angrily demanding what was the matter with his men. 78

The king, then, went into the Shiva Temple and implored for the defeat of the Bengali army.[82] Later, in the night, he dreamt that his prayer was answered. But he found out that most of his men had retreated. The next morning, he decided to try out his fate as a king. He mounted an elephant with a large quantity of gold and silver and went into the Brahmaputra river. He prayed that if his army had defeat in store for them, the river should swallow him, but if his men should win the battle he should be able to touch the bottom without sinking. When his elephant was lowered into the Lohit[83] the water touched the stomach of the elephant. The joyous king

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81. Although the Tai-Ahom Kaips controlled the economically strategic region of upper Assam, they never fostered trade nor patronized the traders of the neighbouring principalities. The Tai-Ahoms were agriculturalists who operated on a barter system with minimal cash transactions. Much later, in the late eighteenth century, when the hill communities sought outlets for trading activities being encouraged by the European commercial interests in Assam, the Swargadeo asserted his right of overlordship by demanding the payment of a tax for all the goods which passed through his kingdom.
82. From here the narrative style of the buranji changes dramatically and we get numerous references to Brahmanic Hinduism. The system of time reckoning changes, and the exact date, time of the day, and the occurrence of any natural event are noted with precision from now on.
83. The names Brahmaputra and Lohit are used interchangeably. The Lohit river is a tributary channel flowing at the extreme northern reaches of the Brahmaputra river.

offered gold and silver to the river and took a bath. On hearing of the victory of his forces, prayers and supplication were offered to the Bhodori river.[84] He implored, 'O mother Bhodori, eat the Bengali army.' 79

On the seventh day of Magh,[85] our forces pitched their tents on the bank of the Bhodori. On the north was the river, on the south was Barpeta. When the battle became fierce, many Bengali soldiers were drowned or were swept away by the rivers, the Bhodori and Lohit. The Bengali army fled in a southerly direction. They were caught in a swamp where the women came and beat them to a pulp. In many instances they set them on fire. They were herded up and kept captive in an enclosure. They reported this to Akhoy Gohain, who in turn, sent a massage to the Swargadeo. The king ordered that the lower banks and the bridges connecting the north-south banks of the river should be burnt and the captured men were distributed among the nobility. The battle of the Bhodori, fought in lakli Khutmi, on twenty second Magh, was a great victory. 80

Mumai Tamuli and other members of the nobility were ordered to settle the land. In the north Khorangi, Marangi, Doiyang, Dhanudhar, Bhuyan, Tatoiya, Dulamari, Barsariya and many other villages were settled by Mumai Tamuli. The village of Abhayapur was settled by Phulbarua Piksai. Salguri and Namdang were settled by Tongsu Handique. The fort at Dup Garh demarcated our domain from the Naga settlements. Roumariya inquired, 'Why not donate one fourth of the returns of the newly settled land to the great God?' The king agreed and asked him to be incharge of this duty. All the returns of sowing, trading and war booty were estimated and a tax was levied from then on which became the norm. 81

The king, Pratap Singha, died in lakli Kapsan. He reigned for thirty six years and died in the month of Sraban. So much about the reign of Pratap Singha. But a lot remains to be written down on paper. 82

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84. The Bhodori is another tributary of the Brahmaputra river.
85. The month of Magh corresponds to the period of fifteenth January to fourteenth February. Seventh Magh is twenty second January in the Gregorian calendar.

Bhogaraja extended the road to Salguri. Before ascending to the throne in the presence of his Gohains, Ranga Phukan was sacrificed.[86] A trader named Lakhotiya who had built a house was thrown out. His house was torn down. That year it was stipulated that Hindus could not build houses with an upper beam.[87] Neither, could they wear gold beads, rings and Thuriya.[88] Even Ahoms were to live according to their standards. If they tried to exceed their position they were to be put to death. Hindu women were forbidden from wearing fancy Mekhala Chaddar.[89] Such an offence carried a death sentence. All these rules were made at this time. 83

The niece of Bhandari Gohain was made a princess. A son of her family was adopted. When that child died the king demanded that the sons of the nobles should be buried along with the boy. After consultation, the king was put on a boat and sent off to Tokobari. This was in lakli Karaw.[90] The king ruled for one asari. So much about Bhoga Raja.[91] 84

Nariya Raja[92] sent his men to fight against the Bengalis but it was of no consequence. The older Gohain was put to death and Kho Huwa Gohain was assigned Biranbari. The Bar Patra, Kalungmung Barua, was also killed. In his place Kenduguriya was made the Bar Patra. He was made the Barua of Tangsu Handique. Dilihiya was removed and Dihingia was made the Bar Gohain. Various other atrocities were committed by the king. He was

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86. Human sacrifice was part of the Tai-Ahom belief system. This practice was abolished by Rudra Singha (Sukhrunpha, 1696-1714). Several other tribes in Assam also practised human sacrifice. It was a belief that gods and goddesses had to be propitiated with bloody offerings (For details, see B.C. Gohain, *Human Sacrifice and Head Hunting in Northeast India*, Guwahati: Lawyer's Book Stall, 1977).
87. A stilt house or chang ghar. Early in the reign of Sukapha it was determined as the style for royal abode.
88. Thuriya is a two faced earring. It is considered an unique Assamese ornament. Besides the Ahoms the Kacharis too made a variety of thuriyas in gold, silver and also in wood.
89. An Assamese dress.
90. The tenth lakli of the era. Probably, this lakli date is misquoted. Bhogaraja ruled for three years. Since Pratap Singha died in lakli Kapsan it should be Mungkeo or the twenty fourth lakli year of the era.
91. Nicknamed the 'fleeing king' or Bhogo raja, since he fled to the mountains unable to withstand the invasion of the Mughal army.
92. Nicknamed the 'sick king'.

enraged by the Gohain and had his pregnant wife eaten by dogs. In place of the nobles he let dogs sit on the seats. 85

However, in that year, in the feast given for his mother,[93] the king invited the Gohains, Phukans and Rajkhows[94] The Bhaga-Bura Gohain was standing by the door when the king asked him to take some betel nuts. The Bura Gohain stopped and exchanged some words with the king. After the feast everyone left. After sometime, the Bura Gohain sent for the nobles. A plot was hatched and Kho Huwa Gohain was recalled from Biranbari and offered the throne. The king was deposed. His reign was for four years which ended in lakli Kakow.[95] 86

Jayadhvaj ascended to the throne, put his brothers to death, got rid of Dihingia Bura Gohain and in his place appointed Dilihiya Bura Gohain. His daughter was made the chief queen. One low caste man named Dhanjai found a large trove of precious stones and gold. He gave a huge feast to celebrate his extraordinary luck. Hindus, other low caste people and also Ahoms came to the feast and intermingled. Dhanjai was hacked to death. Bengalis, like Mirza Nathula, were killed. Many other inhabitants of lower Assam were also killed. This was in lakli Runghaw.[96] 88

One day, when the king had gone to Moran, a young child embraced the king. On making inquiries, he found that the child was the grand-daughter of the Bura Gohain. Her mother and her sister were dead. The king decided to adopt her. Later on, the eldest princess had two more girls. 89

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93. It is not clearly stated whether this function was performed in the Hindu tradition, i.e. a Shardha or puja for the well being of the dead, or if it was done according to the Tai-Ahom norms of Dampata, That is, worship offered to the dead ancestor.
94. The Ahom designation was Phee-ker-Mong which meant 'person-eating kingdom'. The Assamese equivalent is Raj-khowa or the 'royal-eater'. In the Tai-Ahom kingdom there were fourteen Raj-khowas posted in strategic areas. (For details, see. J.N. Phuken's 'A Study in the Titles of Ahom Kings, Ministers and other Functionaries of the State', *Journal of the University of Guwahati*, vols. xxi-xxiii, no. 1, Arts, 1970-71, pp. 171-176.
95. Four years added to Mungceo (that is when Bhogaraja died) is Rungmao which is the twentieth lakli year. Kaceo is the thirtieth lakli of the era. Probably, the lakli noted in the text is wrong.
96. Rungmaw is the twenty eighth lakli. Runghaw is not a known lakli year.

The king built a Vishnu temple and the Padma Purana was rhymed. In lakli Khutsing,[97] they dug a fresh pond. The roads were improved by straightening them. The sister of the chief queen was designated as the Parbatiya princess.[98] Tungsu Handique was made a Phukan and assigned Kaliabor. Sengdhar was made the Bar Barua. 90

On hearing of the march of Mirjumla, the Swargadeo deputed Bejadoloi in charge of the campaign. Everyone was ordered to obey his command. The Saring raja died in that year.[99] A new Saring Raja was appointed who was related to Tungsu Handique. Our nobles moved to Guwahati. There they waited for Bejadoloi to give command. The commander ordered that forts should be repaired and protected against the enemy. The Bengali army reached Saraighat. They halted at Kajali. But the nobles feared to make an independent decision, being directed to obey Bejadoloi. In the meantime, the Bengal army kept marching. 91

That year, the king removed his father-in-law from the position of Bar Phukan and conferred on him the designation of Bar Gohain. He was presented a hengdan. In the northern section of the kingdom, the Bar Gohain was all powerful, in the southern section it was Bejadoloi. The Bengali army halted in the fort for the night and the next day made a dash to our side. Finding no obstacle on their way, the Bengali army charged into the area. On seeing the advancing forces, our men started to flee. When the king learnt that his forces had left the field, he fled to Tipam. The Bengalis pursued them. The young nobles, Ghora Konwar, Tangsu Handiques's son Baduli, etc., gave fight to the Bengalis and killed many of them. The Bengalis did not loose many of their men nor incurred great deal of loss, rather our Swargadeo was defeated. A great many people of the kingdom were killed. 92

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97. Khut-ci is the seventeenth lakli year. Once again, the information provided in the buranji and the dates do not match.
98. This designation was for the principal princess only.
99. The relatives of the reigning king were generally appointed as governors. The selection was made from among the six main clans of the Tai-Ahom royal families: the Charingia, Tipamia, Namrupia, Tungkhungia, Parbatiya and Samuguria.

It was the month of Phagun.[100] Baduli, Uddha, Sengdhara - these three together killed Bejadoloi. We sent to Bengal three lakh rupees, ninety elephants, the four sons of the four chief ministers of the king, the king's daughter, and the grand-daughter of the Bar Barua, Nangseng Ghabhoru.[101] Sem Ghabhoru stayed behind. 93

The king set his camp in Bakota. The chiefs who had abandoned the king at the time of the war were put to death. The Bengalis promised to pardon the king if he accepted their hegemony. The Swargadeo decided that death was better than submitting to the Bengalis. The king's disease got worse at this point in time. After visiting Garhgaon he died of an attack of diabetes. He died in lakli Khutmi after a reign of fifteen years. Such was the reign of Bhogoniya Raja.[102] 94

At this point Siringia Raja became the king. After one year he was able to set the kingdom in order. He refused to pay the reparation to the Mughal envoy who was sent to collect the amount. The envoy was Syed Firuz. This was in lakli Mungria.[103] Sengdhara Barua was put to death. Ghora Konwar was made a Barua. Jayadhvaj Singha's daughter was given in marriage to Sengdhara Barua's son, another to the grandson of Hukulahudur and another to Sengmung Gohain. The youngest of the Gohain's had taken shelter in Tongsu Handique's house. He and the other Gohains were brought to court in a crooked sedan chair. The king of Manipur, Ramsingha, fought our king. This battle has been dealt in other buranjis, hence we will not go into a lengthy description here. Chakradhvaj Singha died in lakli Raisan.[104] 95

His brother, Maju Gohain, became the king and took the name of Udyatida. The crooked street of Phutukatal was straightened. Jayadhvaj Singha's daughter, Sarugabhoru was given in marriage to Tongsu Handique's grandson. Sem Gabhoru was

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100. This corresponds to the period between fifteenth February to fifteenth March of the Gregorian calendar.
101. Actually, the tribute was sent to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.
102. He too was nicknamed the 'fleeing king'. The Mughal army led by Mir Jumla marched into Garhgaon, the Tai-Ahom capital, and occupied it. This forced Swargadeo Jayadhvaj Singha out of his palace. Thus the nickname.
103. Following Khutmit it should be lakli Rungkeo which is the forty eighth year of the era. Mungrai or Mungrao is the thirty fourth lakli in a Tai-Ahom era.
104. Raichi, written as Raisan in the chronicle, is the fifty third lakli year of the era.

given in marriage to Lapati's son. In that year an elephant went deaf due to the effects of the solar eclipse. 96

In that year an ascetic came to the king and he was accepted as the spiritual guide of the people. But Mohan, Debera and Namgila - the three of them went and captured the king. On their way they killed Pasahimoluk, Usha Bamun and Pelon Bar Barua. The king asked, 'brother-in-law (Debera) why are you doing this?' He did not pay any heed. Instead, the very next day he took the king to a hill and killed him. This was in lakli Mungmaw.[105] His reign was for four years. This is the end of the reign of Maju Raja. 97

The next king was Saru Raja, who removed Ghora Konwar from the position of Bhitorwal Phukan and Bar Barua. Halguria Phukan was now made the Bhitorwal Phukan. The ascetic was put to death on the stakes. And Debera, who was the chief conspirator in the struggle for ascension, was made the Bar Barua. 98

After occupying the town of Sunapur he fell ill and realized that he was dying. He asked that his brother's son, Kaliya Gohain should be made the new king. But the nobles who were called to this conference disagreed amongst themselves. Some said it should be Kaliya Gohain, others claimed the position for Moran Gohain. 99

Hearing of the discord, the king ordered that Debera Gohain should be captured. Tongsu Handique Phukan's Tamuli,[106] Gokul, reported this to Debera. Debera refused to visit the king. The king's physical condition got worse. He ordered Tongsu Handique to capture Debera. Debera Gohain was prepared for this. Pretending to embrace Tongsu Handique, he stabbed him. He asked his men, Ratanpuria and Dekhinpatia, to catch his enemy. Rai Dangoria Phukan and others who were there were also killed. Next, Debera went to the king and poisoned him. Ghora Konwar's grandson, Laitaimung Garhgaonya Handique, was also crushed to death, along with the king. Hearing of the chaos in the kingdom many people started to flee the domain. 100

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105. The lakli year should be Rungrao, that is the fifty eighth year. I suggest this based on the subsequent information concerning lakli Tao-mi which is the fifty ninth year.
106. The betel nut carrier.

Samuguri Konwar was made the king. He remained king for only twenty days. Sengdhara Phukan killed him and put his candidate, the Tungkhungia Raja on the throne. The Rajkhowas were reaclled from Guwahati and put to death. 101

Kalsu's son was sent to bring back the Bar Phukan. At the time Bargarhiya Bar Gohain was in Guwahati. The Bura Gohain killed Debera and also the king. The Dihingia Konwar was put on the throne. This king constructed a temple on the mouth of the Sesa river. After a year and a half, the Bura Gohain set out to capture the king. The king fought against his captors. The bearers of the Bura Gohain's dula[107] deserted him on seeing that the king himself had come out to chastise them. The Gohain made a pact with the Phukans who came to Katarikham Garh and gave fight to the imperial forces and forced their way into the royal quarters. They captured the king and put him to death. This happened in lakli Tawmi.[108] 102

107. A palanquin.
108. Tawmi is the fifty ninth lakli year of the sixty years comprising a Tai-Ahom era.

Chronicle II

From the reign of Adiraja Swarganarayan to Uparjana Dihingia Raja

Rishi Bashistha chose the pleasant and unpolluted bank of the Dikhou river to establish his ashram. He made his arrangements for the worship of Brahma, which he pursued with single minded concentration.

Indra became afraid that Rishi Bashistha's meditation will cause problems for him. He summoned Syama[109] and asked her to descend to earth to distract Bashistha. Syama tried to dissuade Indra, but he insisted and assured that he will assist her.

Syama tried to disturb Bashistha by singing and dancing. However, she was unsuccessful. Wearied, she decided to take a bath in the Ganges. The strength of Rishi Bashistha's mind was like the sun. Syama bathed in the soothing waters of the Ganga. Indra joined her and they both rollicked in the waters. Bashistha was distracted by them and ended his meditation. 103

Bashistha was enraged. He cursed Indra, the river, and Syama. He told Indra, 'You will take the form of a man.' 'Syama', he said, 'You will have a human for a husband.' Fearful of the curses they pleaded for mercy. Finally, Bashistha said to Indra, 'You will rule in the Nara land as King Aiphlan. You will be a notorious and wicked king.' To Syama, he said, 'You will be born in the kingdom of one Indrapurna, in Sengdam, in the house of a minister. You will marry the king of the region. Indra will impregnate you. After the birth of your son, you will return to heaven. That boy, on reaching adulthood, will become the king of the entire earth.' To the river, he said, 'You will be freed only when Kaliyuga will come to an end.'

109. A goddess in the Hindu pantheon.

In Sengdam, a beautiful girl was born. She grew up to be a beautiful and talented woman. The king of Sengdam saw her in a dream and later took her in marriage in lakli Karaw, in saka 1040. 104

One day, in that very year, the king went for deer hunting. Indra disguised himself as the king and allured the king's wife into a relationship. Later, in the night, the queen saw Indra in a dream who told her that, 'I have impregnated you. The boy born of this relationship will be a great king. He will be known as Swarganarayan. Until the day the baby is born do not have any relationship with your husband, the king.' He also said, 'Your husband will distance you from him during this time. But once the boy is born he will bless you and will bring you down on a golden ladder.'

However, the queen reported all this to the king. The king, Nara Sengdam, listened to this carefully. According to the instructions of the dream he secluded his wife along with four slave women. All provisions were given for the entire time of confinement.

After the delivery the king was informed of the birth of a baby boy. There was a lot of rejoicing on the occasion. He went to Mungrimungram. After celebrations, the boy and his mother were brought down on a golden ladder to Laiday. This boy was named Swarganarayan. 105

In a few years the divine prince became well accomplished in all aspects of knowledge. King Sengdam selected him as the Crown Prince. One day his mother told him, 'You are not the son of the king. You are the son of a divine being.' On hearing this, the prince set out for the mountains of Mungrimungram. He sat in meditation seeking the answer of his parentage.

Satisfied with the boy's zeal, Indra appeared before him in his divine form. Amazed, the boy asked, 'Are you my father?' On being assured he asked again, 'Oh father, to whom should I offer my prayers for the prosperity of my people and the kingdom? In what ways should we offer our prayers?' On hearing this Indra said, 'When your earthly father dies the people of the kingdom will make you their king. Five days after the event come back to this spot. I

will explain everything to you.' Saying this Indra disappeared. The Crown Prince returned to his home.

In saka 1055, lakli Pleksew,[110] the Nara king Sengdam died. The ministers placed Swarganarayan on the throne. Sengdom Raja had ruled for thirty four year. 106

Recalling Indra's advice, king Swarganarayan went to the mountains of Mungrimungram and meditated there. Once again, Indra appeared before him. This time he advised that Somdeo should be worshipped as the chief deity and also explained how to perform the special worship of this deity. Indra advised, 'Keep the image of Somdeo in a secret place. Possession of this image will bestow a great deal of wealth on you.' Indra also said, 'The great king of the Naras, Aiphlan, is also my offspring. Send some good men from your kingdom to his and make friendship with him. Ask for the two pandits, Thaolipling and Thaobokseng and ask them to read the scriptures for you.[111] Make use of the scriptures, do not leave them.' Indra also gifted him a gem studded ring.

Swarganarayan sent the ring and a letter to Aiphlan's court. He asked if he could have the pandits, Thaolipling and Thaobokseng. Seeing Indra's ring and after reading the king's letter, Aiphan immediately responded and sent the two pandits to Swarganarayan's kingdom. A drummer, a flute player, a kettle-drummer, a golden hengdan, a special kind of fishing net, a lasaay bear, a lasaay tiger, a snake, an otter, a cat, a special monkey - these things and other gifts were sent in recognition. The kotoki[112] was rewarded with personal gifts and sent back with assurances of friendship.

When the two pandits arrived in his kingdom, Swarganarayan was extremely delighted and celebrated their visit. He got many of

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110. Written as Plakteo in the Loti-Amra, it is the twenty fifth lakli year of a Tai-Ahom era.
111. The Naras were a literate community. They were specialized astronomers. Assamese call them Nara and the Tai call them Man Name, man-village, nam-water, (literally water (y) village). These astronomers worked out the chronology of the Tai-Ahom history. (Also see, P. Gogoi's *Tai-Ahom kingdom of the Brahmaputra Valley*, Guwahati: Guwahati University, 1968; Ney Elias, *Introductory Sketch of the History of the Shans of Upper Burma and Western Yunnan,* Calcutta: Foreign Department Press, 1876).
112. An envoy or ambassador.

his own people trained by the pandits in religious and other texts. He ruled according to the scriptures. In this manner both the kings of the regions administered their territories and kept close contact with each other. Swarganaryan died in saka 1077. He ruled for twenty two years. 107

The heaven born king had a secret abode in the mountains of Mungrimungram. There he had two sons, Kung Lung and Khun Lai.[113] His two sons were brought down on a golden ladder by the ministers of the kingdom and were designated as kings. The chief ministers of the kingdom built the capital in Mungrimungram. There they built the royal palace.

When king Aiphlan was informed of the demise of Swarganarayan, he grieved the loss of his friend. He sent some of his well trained men with the royal scriptures of state administration to Khung Lung and Khun Lai's kingdom. In the boat taking his favourite men was one Khontai, one Khontalakating, one Khonlaytiyao, one Khonbukh, one Khontipiyoy, one Khokphratyang, one Lasatil, one Khontang, one Huphraban, one Khonkeewban, one Khokphratyang - in all, eleven men. This clan of servants belonged to a single royal family. After enjoying their stay for a while in Mungrimungram, they left for the kingdom of Laiday. Finding that most of the inhabitants had left the region, they set up their administration there. 108

In ancient times, the kingdom of Laiday was ruled by an unrelated king named Khunlum. After him, two of his sons, Khenkham and Tyao Samun, became kings. But they could not rule the kingdoms for long. Many of their people fled to the Lohit valley. As such, this gave the king of Baanthao an opportunity to annex the kingdom. The local inhabitants fled. Later on, in Baanthao, the peoples of the two kingdoms fought against each other and many lost their lives. Thereupon a Naga, who was earlier a slave, usurped power and became the king. His reign was marked by oppression and irreligious administration. The ministers could not tolerate this anymore and had him killed. They brought

113. This story is somewhat different from the other tales concerning the Tai-Ahom origin. Also, in this story of origins Khun Lung and Khun Lai are represented as eleventh century personages, and are not attributed to the sixth century which is the generally accepted date.

Khunlai's eldest son, Tyao Taiphra, to their kingdom and made him their king.

In the kingdom of Laiday, Khun Lung and Khun Lai remained as king for sometime. One day, Khun Lung said, 'I had presented a dish of gold to Somdeo and had planted a tree, too, whose branches I decorated with gold. I should be the monarch here.' Khun Lai replied, 'I wear the golden thread, therefore I should be king.' The ministers assembled to discuss the matter. They decided that Khun Lai should be the king since their calculations said so. In remorse Khun Lung left the kingdom. He went back to heaven. And Khun Lai became the monarch in the kingdom of Laiday. 109

In Mungrimungram, Khun Lai's nephew, Tyaoluluk, was made the king. Tyaoluluk had three sons, Bor Tyayakum, Madhyam Tyaomunbing and Saru Khunlungtyep.[114] They came from Mungrimungram to the kingdom of Mungkhamunja. They crossed the Lohit[115] but did not find it conducive to stay there, and so they went to Maolung. From there they went to Tilung.[116] In this province there was a yellow fragrant lake, lake Champa. Here, Tyayakum became the king. Also, his younger brother, Tyao Khunbing, became the king. They ruled the provinces of Mungmung and Munghkan.[117]

One day, king Tyaokhun sent his ambassador to king Thaokhun. He demanded that the kingdom of Mungmao should be ceded to him. He suggested that Thaokhun should rule over Mungthao Kaawka. Further, he invoked his divine origin as the grandson of the great monarch Khun Lung and threatened to take action against Thaokhun if he did not abide by his commad. He also

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114. The terms Bor, Madhyam and Saru are Indian derivatives. In other instances too, Indian words have been freely used. The use of these terms indicate that this buranji was written after the seventeenth century when the Assamese language had become the common medium in the Lauhitya valley.
115. It appears that before the thirteenth century settlement of the Tai-Ahoms in Assam, several invaders had previously entered the Lauhitya valley from the east and opened the line of communication with upper Burma.
116. Probably denotes the area of the Turung or Tubena river which was the original homeland of the Tai-Turung, who call themselves Tairung. They are mainly concentrated in the Tiok and Titabar areas of the Jorhat district in upper Assam.
117. Several provinces/chiefdoms are mentioned in this chronicle. Many of these places do not exist anymore. Hence it is difficult to locate these historic sights. Roughly, they were spread across the Hukoong Valley, in upper Burma.

reminded him that defiance would anger the god, Indra. The king of Tyaokhun was frightened and left the kingdom of Mungmao and went to the province of Munglung Kaawkang. But afraid of the power of king Tyayakum, he left for Mungjangkal.

When Thakhum abdicated his position, Tyayakum's son, Thotyaypung, was made the ruler of the province of Maolung. King Tyaokhunkum remained in Mungthan. The provinces of Mungrimungram and Mungkhutra-Mungmao were settled with rulers. He ruled over the whole kingdom. He placed his three sons in three different districts. His eldest son was made the ruler of Mungteej, while his two other sons, Lasan Phutangkhang and Kukkingtyao, were made rulers of two other provinces.

Taokhunkum remained king of Mungkhan. He assembled his family and advised them that they should live in accord. They should never fight against each other, share their food, never defy religion and make their sons successors to the throne.[118] After having given this advice he left for his heavenly abode. 110

The son of the king of Mungmaaw was Mitungmung. He had only one daughter, named Blokkhansen, whose Hindu name was Phul. She was given in marriage to the son of the king of Taokan. The chief queen in Taokan was the daughter of the Bura Gohain, Thakhenpung. Her name was Nangniwpum. Indra's grandson Blokkamdeng impregnated this princess. When the king became aware of her pregnancy, he sent her back to her father's house. The Bura Gohain replied that it was not fitting for him to keep the wife of the king. So saying, he sent her back to her husband's house.

After consultation with the king, the Bura Gohain built a house in the mountains for his daughter which was well provided for with men and goods. Here a baby boy was born. When the princess was questioned she replied that a divine being had impregnated her. Being assured of the truth, the boy was brought back to the kingdom with due celebration. This boy was named Sukhranpha.

He lived in his grandparents, house for three years. When the king of Langipaniupung committed suicide, the Bura Gohain

118. The law of hereditary succession was established. However, this rule was not strictly followed in the Tai-Ahom kingdom of Assam.

placed Sukhrangpha on the throne. This king is known as the king of Mungmaaw.[119] 111

Let us now talk of Khun Lai. Khun Lai's brother, who was a king, had two sons, Thaotaiphra and Thaotyansun. Complying with Khun Lai's wishes, the eldest son, Thaotaiphra, was made the ruler of Balusong. In lakli Taosingha, in saka 1097, Khun Lai went back to heaven. He ruled for nineteen years.

The ministers placed Tyaotaanbun on the throne in Laiday. He died in lakli Raymit,[120] saka 1113, after ruling for thirteen years.

Tyaotaanbun had two sons - Tyaotanbun and Tangtoyphra. Tyaotangpung became the king in Laiday. But he was ousted by the younger brother, Tyaotangtoyphra. Saddened by the defeat, Tyaotangpung left for Mungrimungram. He went and stayed with Khun Lung's son, Thaolulu. Soon after, Tyoatangtoyphra died. Phanlungjankan became king. When he died, the kingdom passed to another line of kings who were not related to the former family. The exiled brother died and his son became the king in lakli Taosan.[121] After his death, the kingdom of Bantao passed to another line. 112

Tyaobun's son, Thaokhun who had taken refuge in the kingdom of Thaolulu left Mungrimungram for Mungkhammung. There he established his rule. From there he went to Mungkan. Thereupon, he reached Mungmaaw. His relative, the king of Khulunglangipaniupung welcomed him. He told him, 'Do not cross into the lower part of the king. We are of the same divine family. We have been enjoying the same region. So you, too, should stay in Khanangjin.' He bade him farewell and gave his sister Langmung Blokkhensen in marriage to him.

He is also known as Tyaotanglaw or Tyaophrophrang. Altogether he has three names. His son was Sukaphra, born in lakli Khutngi or saka 1117. He was raised with great deal of love by his grandfather. He lived with him for nineteen years. 113

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119. The famous Tai kingdom in upper Burma.
120. The twenty third lakli year of a Tai-Ahom era.
121. The ninth lakli year.

Sukaphra became king of Khanangjin in lakli Katraw,[122] saka 1137. After a while, he went to Bukhrangnaphra. There he consulted with the elders and decided that Sukhranpha should rule over the kingdom, and he would move elsewhere. Thereafter, in saka 1138, he took the permission of Sukhranpha and went to his grandfather's house. From there he procured the image of Somdeo and came to his father's house in Mungkhammungja. Three hundred copper pots, each could cook food for three men, nine hundred men, one tusker, one female elephant, a mahut, three hundred horses with blinders, all these came along with the king, Sukhapha.[123] The ministers who came with him were the minister of Mungkham - Takhuthuka, the ministers of Mungkhan - Khunkang, Mungkhumu, the chief minister, Phralungkhuntung, the minister of Mungphukari - Tathunlaku, the minister of Mungkhur - Khunkung, Thaokhensunglung, Thaomung, Surangkham, Banlung, Mungkhi, Mungja - in all eleven notables who were joined by Khunluntyao on their journey. They started southward in saka 1170. In 1172 they reached Batorubaan, in saka 1175 they were in Mungunnongmunati. In 1173, they arrived in the territory of the Hatikhariya Nagas. After crossing the Naamotiyuka river they arrived in the village of the Uparsakuwa in 1180.[124] Then they came to Mungkeew.

There Sukhapha halted for sometime. He sent his brother, Khunlai, and other men, such as, Khunkang Khunantung, Kangkhun, Kanang, Thaomung Keewkhun, Thaokenlung, Thaomung Bangkham - in all seven men, to occupy Mungkang. After settling the area they joined their leader, Sukhapha.

From Langmi Tayokaaw they came to Monkheng. From there to Mungkham, to Motiliphri and then to Kantai. In saka 1182, they reached Khumjang, and halted on the side of the Khumjang lake.[125]

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122. The forty sixth lakli year.
123. The spelling is not consistent in the buranji. Sometimes it is spelt as Sukapha, and at other times as Sukaphra.
124. These are Assamese names. Probably the names by which the local groups referred to themselves were different.
125. Another buranji gives a different route of migration. According to this account, 'they first came to Punati, then to Hathidhara, thereupon, they crossed the river and reached Biran. From there they moved on to Sakhai and Mogluu, where they stayed for a while. They defeated two Naga villages, Bankak and Mungkring. Between saka 1277 and 1284 they roamed in the Naga hills, defeated many Nagas and took their villages' (*Assam Buranji*, obtained from Sukumar Mahanta, S.K. Bhuyan Library, Guwahati).

He deputed his men to invade the Naga villages. The Nagas of Kharkhun, Mungkan, Tingkhan, Bingpaw, Latam, Lanapang and Taru could not withstand the invasion of Sukhapa and his men. They had to surrender. After pacifying the region, Sukaphra appointed Kangkhomung as the governor of the territory. After crossing Kangjang they stopped in Dhoikong. Once again, he sent out his men to subdue the Nagas of the region. There were six villages - Papukiya, Khamtaliya, Khunkhotiya, Khunlungiya, Tongtingya, Jangkhongiya. Unable to defend themselves, the Nagas fled from their villages. Those Nagas who were resistant were forced to eat the flesh of their brethren - brothers were given the meat of their brother, fathers that of their son.[126] 114

They reached the borders of the river Doibang (Nammungom).[127] They crossed the river there and reached Namrup. To cross the river, they had to take boats from the Nagas in which they carried their horses, the two elephants and also the people who accompanied them. In saka 1183, they came down to the lower banks of the Dihing river. In saka 1184, they made their first settlement near the two Naga villages. Khuntong was left there to rule the territory. Moving along side the lower banks of the Dihing, they came to Tipam. There they halted for three years. On observing that the volume of water there was heavier than in other places they decided to move away after leaving Kanpung to organize the settlement. They moved further southward along the Dihing river and came to Salguri. There they stayed for five years. Being a heavily forested area, they decided to move further southward and came to Habung.[128] 115

Some of the men stayed back to monitor the flow of water in the region of Tipam. In Tipam, the Bura Gohain met a Moran woman and was attracted to her. He decided to stay there. He put

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126. A somewhat similar practise of eating human flesh was in vogue among the Jaiantias. In their custom the royal family had to partake a small quantity of rice cooked in the blood of the victim sacrificed to the Mother Goddess (See Gohain's *Headhunting*, pp. 17-18).
127. Also known as the Dibang river.
128. An important city within the Chutia domain. The exact location of Habung remains a controversy. Recently on one of my field trips to Dhemaji, in the Lakhimpur district, I visited Borajaha Sapari which, since 1990, has been identified as Wabung. The Ahom Land Demand Movement claims this spot as their future capital.

his hengdan away in a bird's nest. The Moran woman given birth to two sons. When the Bura Gohain fell ill, he called his sons and told them that formerly he was the minister of the king. He advised them, 'To the king when you are thirty five and fourteen years, respectively. Show him the hengdan which will testify to your noble birth'. The Bura Gohain died soon after.

At that time, when the king was still in the hills, the Morans came to pay their tribute. One day, seeing one of them the king asked who he was. The boys replied that they were the sons of the Bura Gohain. They narrated the story their father had told them and also showed the hengdan. Being assured of their heritage the king invited them inside and latter presented them with suitable titles befitting their parentage. 116

After staying for three years in Habung, the king decided to move southward. Noticing that the streams were fast flowing and the water heavy in volume, they moved to the lower banks of the Lohit and came to Dikhoumukh. From there they came to the banks of the Dili river. Moving further southward they halted to check the water. They noticed that the volume was much heavier and so they called it Songtok. From that day on Sukaphra became the king of the region of Songtok. He sent an ambassador to Sukhranpha's court along with a few gifts which inlcuded a silver vessel, a tray, three pitchers, two water pots, eleven pieces of cotton cloth, and ten pieces of waist cloth. In return, Sukranpha sent a horse, Karphai bow, a silver shirt, golden sandals, a golden cap, and various other articles. In this manner both the kings maintained amicable relations. Sukaphra stayed in Songtok for two years. Tukhunlal was appointed as Barua[129] of the province. They moved back to Simoluguri. There they stayed for two more years. His men found that in Namdang there were nearly three thousand ghats[130] and in Saring there were nearly three hundred of them. However feeling uncomfortable they did not stay for long and returned to Dikhou. After staying there for a year they realized that it was not suitable and therefore moved again. They halted for a while in the mountains, near the abode of god Nakuri. In that region a striped horse was occasionly seen. They offered prayers to the gods and

129. A governor.
130. Boat landings.

gave eight pieces of gold, two yards of special cloth, and one piece of Kham cloth as gift to the deity. They stayed there until saka 1185. 117

One day, four men went to Phatasil. There they saw a strange man, who beckoned them. He said, 'I have designated your leader as the king of Saumarpith.[131] I am Shiva.' On hearing this one of the men jeered and said, 'So this man in the wilderness has made our leader a king'. The man died immediately. On witnessing this event the other three men bowed down to the stranger. Thereupon, the stranger told them, 'Go to your king and ask him to make a sacrifice to me. He should offer thirteen pigs in sacrifice.' The three men returned to the camp. They narrated the event to the king. To confirm this more men were sent out to the spot but they did not meet the stranger. One day, the stranger appeared to the king in his dreams. Soon after, the king offered worship and sacrifice.

During this time, when our king was in the mountains, he invited the Barahis from Katholbari to eat dinner with him. On inquiring if they enjoyed the meal they replied that the vegetable dish was lacking in salt. The king immediately hired them to be his cooks and they came to be called Changmai. They lived in this mountainous settlement for five years. 118

In saka 1190, Tyaolung Sukaphra died. It was lakli Kamao. He had ruled his group for forty two years. 119

In lakli Kapchi[132] his son Tyaosulung Sutaphra became king. He died in saka 1203, after ruling for eleven years.

There upon, his son Tyaolungtyao Sukhrapha became king. In his reign there were many skirmishes with the ruler of Kamata. Both the parties lost a good deal of their soldiers. Finally, the ruler of Kamata sent his envoy to our court. He told them, 'If we go on fighting like this what good will come to either group. Many more will die. But the problem will not be solved. It will be prudent if both the parties live in peace with each other. We are ready for friendship. The king of Kamata has a sister named Rajani. As a gesture of peace we offer her hand to you, king.' On hearing this, our king replied, 'I am pleased. I would like to make peace with you.

131. Lauhitya valley is referred to as Saumar in the Yogini Tantra.
132. The forty first year.

We have lot to share in future. I will be happy to make an alliance with the king of Kamata.' Later, our king sent his ambassador to the court of the king of Kamata. He sent various gifts to the king and his sister. She was made the chief queen in the royal household. In this way, the king of Kamata and Tyaolungtyao became allies.

The queen gave birth to a boy who was named Tyao Sulai. When he came of age he was made the ruler of Saring. In lakli Laisingha,[133] saka 1254, Tayolungtyao Sukhrapha died after ruling for thirty four years. 120

His son Tyao Sukhrapha ascended to the throne. In his regin the Bura Gohain Thaomunglungtakhunmi was insulted by the king and he pledged to de-throne him and make Tyao Sulai, the chief of Saring, the overlord of the region. Tyao Sulai agreed to this plan.

When the king of Kamata heard of the plot, he moved with his men and forces first to Baanphran and later to Nawdhang, in Saring. When Tyao Sukhanphra learnt about it, he sent his men to inquire from Tyao Sulai why the king of Kamata was in the vicinity of his domain. To this Tyao Sulai replied that he had no idea. Tyao Sukhamphra sent his men to ask the king why he was there. The king replied that he was on a hunting expedition and came into the territory of his friend. Our king sent his men with gifts and asked that the Bura Gohain and Tyao Sulai should be handed over to him. The king of Kamata agreed and asked the king to forgive their crime. Our king agreed to honour his request. Fearing for his life, the Bura Gohain refused to appear before the king. The king of Kamata went back to his kingdom. Tyao Sulai went back with him. 121

Tyao Sukanphra died in saka 1286, lakli Katmaw,[134] after ruling for thirty three years.

After his death there was disorder in the kingdom for six years. The ministers consulted among themselves and after due deliberation elected one of the king's relatives, one Tyao Lungsutamphra, who at that time was living in the Naga village of Lahnaji. This event took place in lakli Kapsan, in saka 1291. The enthronement ceremony took place in Champaguri. 122

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133. Also written as Rai-chi-nga. It is the forty third lakli year.
134. The sixteenth lakli year of a Taosingha era.

During his reign, he made friendship with the Chutia king. One day asking him to join in a pleasure trip, the Chutia king killed him. He was trampled by a bull. He ruled for eleven years and died in lakli Kapsingha, in saka 1302.

His brother, Tyao Phrakhampha became the king. His regin was rife with all kinds of misdeeds. Finally, the ministers killed him in lakli Raisingha. He ruled for eleven years. This time for eight years there was chaos in the kingdom. 123

One of the ministers, Khawkhum, said 'I met a boy of noble birth on the other side of the Lohit'. The other ministers invited Saudang and inquired about his heritage. Being confirmed of his noble ancestry they asked him to be their king.[135] This event took place in lakli Kaplaw,[136] in saka 1320. The new king took the name of Tyao Phrasudang.

The princess Nangseng had an affair with the ruler of Tipam. The king noticed that the princess was paying overt attention to the Tipam ruler Tyao Sulai. In turn, the Tipam king sent a ring inlaid with gems to the princess. This was informed to the king. The king demanded of the Tipam ruler why did he do this. Finally, the Tipam king and his brothers fled from our kingdom. 124

The Nara king was informed that in the lower half of the kingdom none of his family members were in power. The king then deputed Tyaosunpok to bring it under the control of his kinsmen and extend his rule there. He halted in the sugarcane fields of Tipam. He was joined by the ruler of Tipam and the princes of Tipam and Tamraw. On hearing of the approach of the enemy forces, the Bar Gohain, Thaomunglung Tyaotanbin, went out to fight. The Nara army fled from the field. They went back to their own kingdom. The prince of Tipam, the chief of Tipam and Tamraw - these three took refuge in the kingdom of Kamata. Since they had sided with enemy forces our king was waiting for an opportunity to punish them. One day, he sent for them and had them killed along

135. This event was the turning point in the Tai-Ahom kingdom. Gradually the Tai-Ahoms were Brahmanized and their so-called original culture was relegated to the background.

136. It should be Dap-plao, that is the second lakli year of a era.

with many other Nagas. At Barsimoluguri, he celebrated his victory by stringing a garland of skulls.[137] 125

Soon after, the king gave battle to the king of Kamata. He pleaded with our king to let him be and promised to pay tribute. On hearing this, the king sent Bar Gohain Thaomunglung to discuss the matter with the king of Kamata. The king asked for our help to fight the Bengalis. The combined forces defeated the Bengali army. In appreciation of the timely help, the king of Kamata gave his daughter Bhajoni to king Sudang. The king's father was called Manik and his brother was called Sengkhon. Along with the bride, the king of Kamata sent a tusker, one female elephant, two horses, a silver waist cloth, twelve more pieces of waist cloth, twenty slaves, and forty seven households of slave women, and various other expensive articles. King Sudang made the princess of Kamata his chief queen. In the meanwhile, our army fought the army of Bengal and defeated them on the banks of the Karatoya. They commemorated their victory by digging a pond in that spot. 126

For eight years, the Ahom king had not sent an ambassador to the Nara court. Around the same time, Mung Khammung,[138] Aitonmung[139] and Tipam had not paid tribute for seven years. In lakli Rungraaw, saka 1326, king Sudang sent his ambassador named Tyaopunghan with a special letter to the Nara king, Surunpha. The letter read as such, 'Mung Khangmungjang, Mung Aiton and Tipam - these three lords have not remitted your share of tribute, as yet. Therefore, I want to punish these three lords and their peoples. What would you suggest? Let me know.' On hearing this the Nara king, Surunpha, sent his men to the lords of these places demanding why they had failed to pay tribute to his brother, the Ahom, their lord? Why were they pretending to be independent?

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137. Headhunting was a feat of great pride among the Tai-Ahoms. It was a mark of victory and subjugation of the enemy forces. This ritual was perfomed throughout The Tai-Ahom rule in Assam. Probably, its earliest mention is in connection with the Chutias who were defeated by the Ahoms in the early sixteenth century.
138. Probably Mung Khammung is same as Mung Khamyang. The terms literally mean 'the place where gold is found'.
139. 'The Aiton village.' Presently in Assam the group called Aiton is concentrated in the Golaghat district.

Along with our ambassador Pungmaw, the Nara king sent his own envoy named Tyaolung Baan who brought presents of a horse, a special horse, a herbal mouthwash, an embroidered seat for the horse and a high platform used for watching crop.

Soon after the arrival of the two ambassadors, in lakli Kakeew,[140] saka 1330, king Sudang died. He ruled for ten years.

His son, Sujangpha ascended to the throne. He died in lakli Raisa, saka 1344, after ruling for fourteen years. One of his family members, Tyaophra Suphuk became king in saka 1360. He died after ruling for sixteen years.

In Aahaar,[141] saka 1360, his son Tyaophra Susen became king. It was a night of solar eclipse.

The Aakhampha Nagas made a solemn promise by immersing their hands in water. They came to complain to the king that the Tungsuwal Nagas were creating havoc and they needed the protection of our king against their foes. When the king heard this, he decided to help them. However, he was unaware that the Nagas were planning to trick us. He sent Tyaokanbaan Baruk and Tyaoringmoi to fight the Tungsu Nagas. The king also followed them. The Nagas ambushed our army. Our people managed to kill some of the Nagas, around one hundred and forty of them. Tyaokanbaan Baruk and Tyaoringmai were both killed. Our king lost the battle.

In saka 1309, lakli Rungsew,[142] the king died after ruling for forty nine years. 128

In saka 1410 his son, Tyao Suhan ascended to the throne. In order to resist the attacks of the Tungsu Nagas, he ordered Mungkong to build a fort.

In 1411, in Saut,[143] the Kacharis advanced to fight us. The king deputed Khunlung Khampeng as commander of our forces. He assembled his men for battle and proceeded on elephant back.

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140. The thirtieth lakli year.
141. The period covering from the fifteenth of May to the fourteenth of June in the Gregorian calendar.
142. The eighteenth lakli year of an era.
143. Corresponding to the fifteenth of March to the fourteenth of April of the Gregorian calendar.

Thaomungbangrun was deputed as second in command. The Kacharis kept advancing. Our army reached the banks of the Dikhou, where the Kacharis gave battle. Thaomungbangrun Khawpeng Khamunglung fled on his elephant. We lost one hundred and twenty soldiers. The Kacharis chased the retreating army and they arrived at Tungsu. Mungkong, who was in-charge of building a fort died in battle. The king, Taopha Suhan, also fled to the other side of the Dikhou river. From there he sent his envoy to the Kacharis and made a pact by presenting a princess named Langji, one tusker, one female elephant and twelve slaves.

Khunlung Khampeng was formerly known as Thaomulung. His progeny were known as Phulung Khampeng. His two grandchildren were adopted by the king in saka 1412. From then on the progeny of Thaokangbaan were designated as Thaomulung.

One day Tai-Turban, an Ahom, stole from the royal granary. He was caught and was reported to the king. On this instance, the king summoned all the Ahoms to Misong Taotab. The offender, Turban, sneaked a spear into the meeting. Finding an opportunity, he drew out his spear and stabbled the king to death. The king was killed instantly. His reign was for four years. The ministers killed Turban after declaring him a rebel. This event happened in lakli Raihit,[144] saka 1314.[145]

In saka 1414, in lakli Mungsew,[146] his son, Tyaowutyapha Supin, became the new king. This king, Supinphra, was killed after the reign of four years. 129

After this incident, the ministers selected Sukang as their king. This was in saka 1418. On becoming king he took the name of Tyaopha Suhum. This king is also known as Upar Dihingia.[147] After living in the mountains for a while, he made his capital in Dihing, in saka 1424. In 1426 he deputed Thaomungnangbaan and Tyaobungpeng to fight against the Aiton Nagas.[148] On being taken

144. This lakli is not known to the Tai-Ahoms.
145. It should be 1414 and not 1314 as noted in the buranji.
146. Also Mung-keo or the twenty fourth lakli year.
147. Upar Dihing, a referential term for 'the one who lives (above) north of the Dihing river'.
148. A variety of local peoples of the Lauhitya valley are called Nagas by the Tai-Ahoms. The Aitoniyas are also referred to as Naga in this buranji. Interestingly, however, now the Aitons form an integral part of the Tai revivalism movement in Assam.

by surprise, the Nagas agreed to make peace by giving one of the Naga princesses and an elephant called Puyan. In 1471, our king sent his men to Habung. There they found an old brahman. This brahman had earlier offered significant services to our king. Hence, now he was rewarded with a sacred gold thread and was accepted into the royal household. He was given a title and was made in-charge of the elephants and pigs. 130

The Chutia king, Birnarayan, sent some men to our domain, who disguised themselves and were on the look out to create mischief. One day, a huge fish was found in the Dihing river. Our men caught the fish. The Chutia minister Monichanda, demanded, 'Who has come into our waters and fished in our territory?' The Chutias boarded their boats and came out to fight us. But they could not defeat our men. Instead, we captured many Chutias and also brought the fish. This was reported to the Chutia king, Birnarayan. The king ordered his men to get ready for war. The Chutia troops were assembled and they encamped by the banks of the Dikhou. When our king heard this, he deputed Phrasengmung to prepare for war. In the battle fought between our forces and the Chutias, their men were chased from Dikhomukh to the banks of the Diboru. The Chutias lost many of their soldiers and our men captured the nephew of their minister, Lesan. The Chutia minister, Monichanda Barua, Barhul Barua and the king's brother Dhela continued to fight us for five more days. Monichanda Barua was injured by an arrow. Unable to fight any longer, Barhul Barua and his troops fled to Sadiya. In that war the Chutias lost a great deal of their men, approximately four thousand of them. Three thousand were captured by our men. It was reasoned by Konseng Gohain that the huge number of war captives were a dangerous lot. They were killed in the deogarh and a garland of their skulls were strung together. The king then left Habung for Dihing in saka 1441.

The Chutia king Dharmanarayan's son, Birnarayan, ordered that a new road should be built. At the end of the road a fort was built beside the Dikhou. When our king was informed of this new development he sent Sadesengkhon and Thaorailung to resist the Chutia advancement. Our men were unable to give battle and retreated to the fort in Dihing. Later, they fought under the command of one Kengmung, who was killed in battle. The king sent his ministers to the battle field. He himself followed the troops.

Our men won a victory in Laiday. Three Chutia boats were captured. On inquiring from a boatmen they found out that Birnarayan was waiting by the bank of the Diboru river. The king ordered Phrasengkung Kinglen to proceed to the Diboru river. After offering worship to the spirits in the mountains, in saka 1444, the king moved to the banks of the Sesa river. One of the ministers named Thaobaan Barua built a fort on the banks of the Diboru river and from there gave battle to the Chutias. From Sesa, the king came to the banks of the Diboru river. Phrasengmung and Tyaolung Kinglung fought a naval war with the Chutias and chased them to Sadiya. The king also chased these men as far as Sadiya. 131

The Chutia king asked Phrasengmung and Kinglung to negotiate peace with our king. He sent presents consisting of a pair of golden bangles and kamarbandhs. Through Phrasengmung, he sent two golden trays and two straw mats. Through Kinglung, he sent a pair of anchors for the royal boat and two mats. Further, he sent word that they will not fight our king every year, rather, they will pay annual tribute. On hearing this, our king replied that the Chutia king should present him with the golden tooth, the golden cat, the golden bed, along with the eldest daughter of the king, a female elephant and ten other elephants. On hearing this the king replied that he would gladly present his eldest daughter, a female elephant and ten other elephants, but the golden tooth, bed and cat were his heirlooms and he could not part with them. He sent his men to our ambassador with presents of a golden bowl, a pair of golden bangles, a golden vessel, a mat, a pair of golden sandals, and an elephant. He also sent a dagger to the minister. This was reported to our king by the ministers. 132

When king Suhumpha heard this he summoned Phrasengmung Bar Gohain, Sulongking Bar Patra, Thaomusen Handique, Thaomungbaanlung, Keewkhun Tyaophlang, Kurin Bar Patra - all of them were his important ministers. He told them that the Chutia king was not agreeable to his demands and was in a mood to fight our forces again. Our men agreed to send their naval fleet to fight the Chutias. At this time, the Chutia king was digging a pond. On hearing of the approach of our forces, the Chutia king left his domain in the hands of his wife and along with his troops

fled to the mountains of Doidam.[149] Our king occupied the capital. He sent his men to chase the Chutias away. The battle that followed was disastrous for the Chutias.

The Chutia king was unable to resist our army. He fled to the Chandagiri hills. Our men surrounded the foothills. The Chutias, in turn, rolled big boulders down the slope. Our forces were unable to proceed upward, hence, they retreated. One noble, Senkham Barua, was captured by the Chutias. This event alarmed our men. They rallied under the command of Phrasengmung Bar Gohain and Thaomungkinkham. The troops were divided into sections. One group under Thaomungseng formed the western command, another under Thaomungbaanlung formed the south wing, and the third section under the command of Rukseng and Aikhonkhun Saikia circled the berry grove on the foothills. In this manner, our men managed to climb up the hills. They found that with a small band, about forty men, the Chutia king was trying to resist our forces. Our men descended and surrounded the hills from all three sides. Two Saikias chased the Chutias to the fort and fought against them. The Chutias tried to fight our men by rolling stones towards them. A few men were killed. On noticing that his men were being killed, Jungmungkhaon commanded the soldiers riding elephants to chase the Chutias. 133

At the entrance of the fort, the Chutias and our men had a hasty battle. The Chutias were unable to fight and therefore fled. Our men proceeded to capture the Chutia king. The king was wounded by an arrow. Seeing that his people were fleeing the battle, he himself came forward and fought the enemy. Jungmung was wounded in the battle. But Birnarayan, Dharmanaryan's son, was killed. Soon after, the Chutia princess was captured, along with the golden tooth, bed, cat and all that our men could lay their hands on. The victorious army on their return faced an untoward event. The deodhai, Lapitphratyang, was killed by a stray arrow. In this way after defeating the Chutias, the troops returned to the capital and paid their homage to the king. The king, however, was very unhappy to hear about the death of the deodhai.

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149. Literally 'the black mountains'. The exact location is not known.

The king called upon his ministers and after discussing about the arrangments to be made for the newly occupied territory, appointed Thaomunglung Phrasengmung as his Gohain in the Chutia domain. Three hundred men were put under his command, three elephants were given to him and his headquarter was established at Sadiya.

The victorious king returned to his capital. The king offered worship in the temple constructed in the foothills of the mountains. The victory was commemorated by making gifts to the ministers and also the general populace. Having in his possession the Chutia royal symbols of the golden tooth, cat, umbrella, etc, he now entered his domain with due ceremony by beating the drums and sounding the victory sounds.[150] He declared himself the chief king of the region and sat on the royal chair. He also gave hengdans to three of his ministers and appointed the chair bearers.[151] This event took place in lakli Pleksing. Further, it was declared that no one, but the king, could sit on the special chair. This was in 1445. 134

Taitun Phra Phukuyammung, who belonged to the family of the Nara king rose in revolt. A messenger on an elephant, called Plailung, was sent to Thaomungseng, the minister in Sadiya. Further, the king sent Thaomungseng Handique and Tyaosulung at the head of his troops. Soon after, the king himself proceeded against his enemy. The Nara Phukan led the Nara army. Thaokhamjang Nara and Patungkhang Nara, both of them joined Phukuyamung Nara against our men. The Naras were defeated by our army and they fled to their kingdom. Khamjang Nara returned to his domain.

The rebel brother of the Nara lord, Phrasengtyao, sent his ambassador pleading for forgiveness. He also promised to give his niece and accepted our king as his overlord. In lakli Katmut,[152] saka 1447, he sent a messenger along with his sister. Phultyao brought gifts from his domain and paid respect to our king. He begged forgiveness for his misdeeds. Punsentyao was given a maiden named

150. These became the symbols of the Tai-Ahom royalty.
151. The special sedan chairs were called dol or dula. They were made of wood and some had a canopy made of cane or fine cloth.
152. The fifty sixth lakli year of the era.

Nangkhampuy, one tusker elephant, and two silver caps to mark the alliance. 135

At the end of the year, the king shifted from Rungrungma to Dihing. In 1448, in lakli Khutsan, Tyaosunglung was awarded the title of Thaomung Sungtyao and was made Handique of the lower region. Sengdimok was given the title of Sungkungri. Tyaopimok was given the name of Baanlung. 136

Suka Barchetia caught four Kachari men. It was to chastise the Kacharis for occupying the territory and restricting the movement of our men. When the Kachari king heard this, he sent his men with a message to the Barchetia. It read, 'The south bank of the river Dikhou and further on is our territory.' On reading this the Barchetia replied, 'We do not want to create trouble. The people living in the vicinity have been creating havoc among our people. They capture our men and their cattle. They take our fish and our vessels.' Also in his letter he asked, 'Why did the Kachari king want to tie a stone around his neck and then try to swim in the ocean?. He has not witnessed the sharpness of our king's sword. The Kacharis should worship their gods. Come and fight us and only then we will set free the captives.' Finally, deciding that the Kachari captives were not worth keeping as ransom, the Chetia let them go with a special message to their king. 137

It said, 'Who-so-ever is able to dig a pond first, can claim this territory.' The Kacharis agreed. Khunkhura Barua asked Kanseng to dig two ponds. Neither pond struck water. But our men deliberated and brought a huge work force who dug a well watered pond. They filled the Kachari pond with mud and blocked the flow of water. In that spot there was a large tree. A spy was placed there to shout the moment he heard the drum. He had to say aloud three times 'this area belongs to the Ahom Maharaja'. Next morning, seeing that the pond was brimming with water they proclaimed that it was the domain of the Swargamaharaja. They sounded all the drums. They also played the victory drums. To the Kacharis, they said, 'The earth is bringing forth the truth and heaven is rejoicing, too.' Our men, told the Kacharis, 'Since heaven has endorsed this decision your group should leave the territory to our king.' 138

On hearing this, the Kachari king replied, 'The Ahoms want to fight.' The Kacharis moved their troops to Dhansiri. Our king, who

was on the other bank of the Dikhou river chased the Kacharis away to Silpukhuri. There they built a fort and Khunkhura was assigned about a hundred men for its defence.

The Kacharis disguised themselves and entered into our camp. They captured six men, who were killed as punishment for the Ahom ploy. Four men were sent to the Kachari king who agreed not to kill them if they told him of our king's plan against the Kacharis. They replied, 'Why ask us? Do you think we know what the king wants to do? Will you rule your country according to our biding? We are beggars. We were roaming your country for alms. You may do as you please.' The Kachari king replied, 'Your Barchetia has been capturing our men and demanding secrets from them. We will send two of your men to your king. You can convey this message to him.' So saying he freed two men. 139

These two narrated to the king everything in detail. The king fought the Kacharis near Silpukhuri and sent a message to their king. The letter read, 'Both the Ahoms and the Kacharis should offer sacrifices and worship to Shiva.[153] Whoever manages to severe the neck of the sacrificial animal in one blow he can have the land.' This was fair enough for the Kacharis, who sent two of their men to the priest for the sacrifice. When they struck their blows, even after four attempts the Kacharis could not do the task. The people proclaimed, 'The land belongs to our Swargadeo, not to the Kacharis.' Slowly the Kacharis retreated to the other side of the Dhansiri river, and our men occupied the other side. 140

In the meantime, Detsuphra joined them. No one was defeated, neither had any one won a decisive victory. The commander, Konseng said, 'The Kacharis should vacate Maringi. If they do not, our king says, "whatever we say or they say, neither of us are right. Mother Earth is always true and right. We are granted this fort and territory by the gods". For ten years both the parties had lived side by side without interruption.....

153. For the first time mention is made to the practise of worshipping the Hindu diety, Shiva.

In 1448, in Aaghun,[154] Thaoklangkham Gohain sent Thaomungsen Handique to fight the Kacharis. They halted beside the banks from where the Kacharis drew water. The king's son, Garhgaonyan Raja, also came with his men and reached the entrance of the Kachari fort. Thaomungtyao and Tyaomung Mungkli were asked to surround the bank. Our men built a fort. The Kacharis came in and gave fight inside the fort. Some of our men fled. This report reached the king. The king moved to Marang. He lived there for five years. They returned to Devagram. Saring Raja and Tyaosukhen were joined by his son Tyaosawrai in lakli Barpa,[155] in Devagram. Tyaosawrai died there. The ministers all agreed, 'We could not get the Kacharis either by water or by land'. (Handwritten by Gangadhar Hastakhyorom). 141

154. The first month of the Tai-Ahom calendar, corresponding to the period between the fifteenth of November to the fourteenth of December. Aaghun is the Assamese equivalent for the Tai-Ahom month of Din-cing.
155. A misquoted lakli which is not known to the Tai-Ahoms.

Chronicle III

From Dihingia Raja to the reign of Swargadeo Pramatta Singha

Dihingia Raja gifted Jakaruwa kuwari to Naga Khunbao. The princess was expecting a child at the time. The king directed that in case a boy was born to her, he will adopt the child. Otherwise, the mother should keep the girl child or else give the child away. The Naga said, 'If a girl is born I will bring her up as my own daughter'. Thus he accepted the bride. 142

After a while the princess gave birth to a boy. Swargadeo named him Kanseng. On coming of age, the young man was given a hengdan and was appointed as the Bar Patra Gohain. He was asked to sit between the two other Gohains. The Gohains were referred to by the king as the silver pillars of his state, while he, the king was the golden pillar. The king asked his two Gohains to share some of the Ahom elephant trainers with the new minister. The Gohains refused. They said, 'We have agreed to let the new minister sit with us, but we cannot let him have some of our elephant trainers'. The king was enraged at this, but he said, 'Well, let it be'. Thereupon, the Chutias, the Barahis, Lukhurahan,[156] and ten elephant trainers were recruited and two hundred men from each of the Gohains were taken and placed under the command of the new Gohain. Two hundred men were termed as Liksuwan,[157] Lahan was made the

156. This was the clan of the royal pall bearers. When the king died some men from this clan were buried along with the deceased. According to the established tradition the eldest son of the *Lukhurakhan* household was chosen for this task and the eldest daughter was given off as a slave to serve in the royal chang. The *lukhurakhans* were prohibited to change their status. This clan was also known as the *Aniyamar Ahom* or 'impure Ahoms'. (S.K. Bhuyan, 'Ahomar Abhidhan Sastra', *Awahan*, vol. iii, no. 3, saka 1853, pp. 257-263; Assam Buranji, B1/R6/A).

157. A paik group. An adult male was designated as paik. He had to perform both civil and military duties. Normally, these men were agriculturists and were drafted into service at the time of war.

Bora. Two hundred more were named Sawrak, and one of the family members of the Gohain was made a Saikia. Earlier these men were not with the king. They were newly formed groups. The territories were divided between both the Gohains. The territory of Dihing was given to the Bura Gohain and the territory of Sadiya was given to the Bar Gohain. 143

Bansang drove the Kacharis away from the Dikhou and fixed his boundary at Jaji.[158] Phrasengmung, the Bar Gohain of Sadiya, became recalcitrant and this was observed by the king. The Bura Gohain's oldest son, Laikulbang, was sent to bring the Bar Gohain to the court. He was removed from his post and had to live with the princes in the capital. His son was made the new Gohain. Laikulbang was given the rajya of Sadiya and was made the Gohain.[159]

The three Gohains sent Garhgaonyan Raja to drive the Kacharis away to Marangi. There they built a fort and stayed for a while. Then they moved to Maiban. Following the advice of the Gohains, the Raja followed the upstream course of the Dhansiri river. The Kacharis crossed the Dhansiri and hid in the jungles. Later they came out with bags full of silver amounting to two thousand pieces[160] and four horses and requested for truce. They also agreed to pay annual tribute and accept the suzerainty of our king. They king agreed. He commanded that they should pay their respect to the Crown Prince. The Kacharis replied, 'But we do not have any boats or boatmen. How will we go to see the Crown Prince? You should send your men to fetch us.' On hearing this Kanseng Bar Patra Gohain said, 'The Kacharis are trying to play a trick on us'. The Garhgaonyan Raja said, 'We are not going to let the Kacharis fool us'. Our men attacked them by boat. The Kacharis

158. Jaji is situated west of the Dikhou river.

159. The Tai-Ahom kingdom was a de-centralised pyramidal organization. The three principal ministers were given complete autonomy to rule their domains and were at times referred to as the raja of the region. The king was the overlord of the entire kingdom.

160. Silver was not mined in Assam. Probably the early silver was imported to Assam from Burma and perhaps from Yunnan in Southern China. Later, Bengal became the main channel through which silver came to Assam. The Assamese silver coins were reputed for purity in metal content. (Also, see *Travels in India* by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, 2 vols., transl. by V. Ball, London, 1925, vol. II, pp. 216-224; N.G. Rhodes, 'Silver in the Himalayas', in *Mudra*, vol. vii, no. 1, 1991).

came out of the jungle and attacked our forces. We lost twelve men. The Garhgaonyan Raja was wounded. Seeing this the commanders fled. They halted at Dergaon. The Raja was escorted by the nobles. 144

The raja of Kamateshwar[161] sent his men to our king with the news that five of his settlements were occupied by the king of Gaur. On receiving this information, the king sent his three Gohains under the command of the Garhgaonyan Raja, who marched at the head of twenty thousand men to assist the king of Kamateshwar in a battle against the army of Gaur. Turbak was killed. In that battle Phrasengmung Gohain was killed, so also, his brother who was the king's son-in-law. The Garhgaonyan Raja was wounded. This was a big battle. 145

After the battle our men dug a pond in the village of Karatoya and Tejang Chetia was deputed as the officer of the new settlement. A royal record was drawn up which read, 'Swarga Maharaja had sent his second son at the head of five lakh men to subdue the Koch-Kushan, his youngest son was sent to fight the Jaiantia and Kacharis, and his eldest son was deputed at the head of five lakh men. He won a victory on the banks of the Karatoya Ganga and organized a village there.' The king of Gaur learnt of the presence of Swargaraja's son in Karatoya. He asked 'What is the purpose of three princes to surround the territory from all three sides with a huge force of thirteen lakh strong?' Sarapur, Patilajoh, Egharahindur, Kampur, Thekara - these five villages were occupied by our men. Our prince replied, 'In the past the princess of Kamateshwar brought these villages as part of her dowry. That is the reason they are counted in our domain. If the king of Kamateshwar leave these five territories to us we will not fight them. But if he doesn't, then we will fight them.'

On hearing this, the king of Kamateshwar said, 'It is better to make friends first, but if this friendship does not last then we will have to fight. Very well I will make an alliance with the Swargaraja.' He sent a princess as gift to our king and he also gave the five village to us. In the meanwhile, the Garhgaonyan Raja along with his men came and settled at Chariduwar.[162] The Koch chief,

161. Also known as Kamata.
162. One of the seven passes between Assam and Bhutan.

Vishwashingha, came to the Garhgaonyan Raja and presented him with tribute. He also asked to be taken under his protection. The Garhgaonyan Raja gave him the administrative control of Kamarupa and Thekara. 146

After making the necessary arrangements and collecting his tribute, the Garhgaonyan Raja came to Dihing to present the tribute to the king. But he did not hand over the princess from Kamateshwar. On learning this, the king asked, 'Where is the princess sent from Kamateshwar? She was given to me, nobody should covet her'. So saying, the king retrieved the girl for himself. 147

In Bohag Bihu[163] of that year the three nobles decided to have a rooster fight for the king. The king decided that 'If the roosters of the Gohains win, I will give my daughters to the Gohain's sons. On the other hand, if my roosters win, I will bring the daughters of the Gohains for my sons.' The Garhgaonyan Raja taunted the king. The king stood up with his hengdan to fight the Raja. The Garhgaonyan Raja also stood up. The Gohains intervened and broke up the fight. 148

After this incident the Garhgaonyan Raja, along with his men went to the banks of the Dihing river and there they settled a village. Our king asked, 'What does he get by becoming independent?' So saying, our king chased them from the Dihing to the banks of Lasang. The Garhgaonyan Raja said, 'Anticipating a war I left the vicinity of the Dihing, but the king does not seem to leave me alone. I do not want to fight.' He sent his wives away. When the king saw this he asked, 'Who are these people? Look at them they are all armed.' The Saudang[164] went to find out the reason behind the mobilization of these people. He reported that they were all the daughters-in-law of the king. The king said, 'We cannot fight them.' So saying he returned with his men to the bank

163. The Spring festival celebrated all over Assam. The contemporary Tai-Ahom revivalists claim that Bihu is analogous to the *Water festival* celebrated in Thailand. A more recent explanation is that Bihu originated in China where it is called Pihu.

164. The body guards of the Swargadeos. The village elders of Kebang Saudang Gaon in Chinamara told me (April 1994) that Saudangs are like the Ahoms, they are Tai.

of the Dihing river. But the king was killed by one Lalimar Turban Lehatiya. The king ruled for forty four years.

Garhgaonyan Raja called the Lehatiya and rewarded him duly. He also assured him that he should bring all his Lehatiya men together under the banner of the Garhgaonyan Raja and they will become his protégé. After gathering them all together, he killed them. He said this had to be done to prevent his murder by the Lehatiyas, as they had killed the former king. 149

After that, the Garhgaonyan Raja made his city in Dikar. Subsequently, they moved to Daulguri, where they set up their village. He died after ruling for twelve years. 150

Vishwanarayan made Naranaryan the king of the Koch kingdom. He said, 'Earlier the king of Assam had confirmed his position on me. But you should remove his overlordship over us.' When Khuraraja[165] became the king, Silarai invited all the brahman pandits together. He told them, 'I want to take the kingdom of Assam. Advise me what I should do?' The brahmans said, 'You are the king of this land. You should be able to occupy more territory. However, you should see that no brahmans are killed.' Silarai replied, 'Surely no brahmans will be killed. I will try my best that without giving battle I can occupy the kingdom of Assam. But you should advise me a way to achieve this.' The brahmans replied, 'How can we advise you to annex the territory without giving battle.' 151

Silarai asked Shankar 'How can we solve this?' Shankar replied, 'There is a way for this. We should first try to find what the ministers think about it. We should win them by giving a lot of attractive presents. Also the peoples of that domain should be won over to our side by giving them presents. If you can do so, you can

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165. His Tai-Ahom name was Sukhampha. There is some confusion concerning his period of rulership. In the *buranji of Kashinath Tamuli Phukan* we are told he ruled for forty nine years, from 1552-1601. There is a ten year gap before the next king, that is Pratap Singha alias Susengpha, succeeded him in 1611. Some other *buranjis* say Sukhampha ruled for forty one years (1552-1593) and ascribe 1603 as the date of Pratap Singha's ascension to the throne. In this arrangement too there is a ten year gap between the period of demise of Khura Raja and the ascension of Pratap Singha. According to this *buranji* Khura Raja ruled for sixty one years that is until 1613. Pratap Singha ascended to the throne after him.

win the region without giving battle.' Silarai said, 'Previously, Lathuna Karziya and Tepu Karziya visited that territory and learnt a lot about them. They had gone as far as Jangrai. Now that we know what they know, I am asking for your advice. Surely, I will do as you have advised.' In this way pretending to be a trader Buku Karziya was sent with three lakh pieces of silver and ten thousand pieces of gold to bribe the royal youth. He went to the court and presented the gold and silver to the ministers and the nobles saying, 'Silarai wants to live in peace with you all. But if you fight it will not be his fault.' The nobles replied, 'Very well, if we obey the king's orders and do not fight we will not have to lay our lives in battle. When the other nobles show signs of aggression we will not join them, but flee.' 152

When Silarai learnt this from Bukutra, he marched to the banks of the Dikhou river. From there, Lathuna Karziya was sent upstream to the banks of the Dili. When our king became aware he sent word to the Dihingia Gohain and to the Bura Gohain's son to remain alert for the enemy along the area of Murkata and the Dili. The other nobles were ordered to march against Silarai and give him battle. Our forces and the army of Silarai had a massive battle on the banks of the Dikhou. But they were unable to chase away the Koch army from our territory. Three nobles fled and came to Garhgaon. Silarai chased them all the way to Mesagarh. Our king fled from his capital and went to Saraikhurung. He left his brother, the Crown Prince to deal with Silarai and chase him out of our kingdom. 153

One day, the Crown Prince and Silarai confronted each other. Silarai asked, 'Who is this?' Our men said, 'He is the Crown Prince'. Silarai replied, 'Call him, I need to speak with him'. After offering prayer to the goddess in the temple, Silarai came to the bank of the Dikhou river and waited there. Our men went to the Crown Prince and informed him that Silarai desired to meet with him. The Prince mounted a horse and set forth to the Dikhou river. He crossed the river and Silarai was amazed to see that the Prince's horse practically walked across the river. He inquired what were the other wonders that the Prince could perform. The Prince asked, 'What do you desire to see?' Silarai replied, 'I would like to row.' The Prince agreed and a boat was given to Silarari. A boatman was also provided. Both the boats, in one was the Prince, and in the other

Silarai, set sail. The Prince won the competition. At this Silarai marveled once again and acknowledged that these men were not mere humans, they were divine. The Prince disappeared immediately as if he was a spirit. 154

The king who was at Saraikhurung sent Lekai Chetia to make a treaty with the Koch commander. He agreed to pay one lakh pieces of silvér to the Koch king annually. Silarai agreed to leave our territory. He further added that 'If your king cannot give the silver as promised, he should give us one of his sons and the sons of the three Gohains'. On hearing this the king was very sad. Three sons of the three Gohains were sent to the Koch camp. Subsequently, the king came back to his capital. 155

When Silarai returned with the sons of the three Gohains and Ashuk Gohain to his domain, his wives seeing these handsome but sad youths asked permission to speak to their husband, Silarai, so that he would free the boys. Silarai agreed to fulfill their wish. They told him, 'You have kept in captivity four noble boys whose parents are much aggrieved with their condition. You should let them return to their own kingdom.' Silarai asked, 'How should I send them back?' They said, 'We have noticed that Sundar Gohain is an expert dice player. Why not play a game of dice with them in which you should loose and thereby let them go as part of the bet.' 156

Silarai invited the four youths to play a game of dice with him. He further told them if they win the game they can go back to their domain. 'However if I win, then you will become my servants.' Thus the game began. Sundar Gohain won. The karziyas said, 'This is not the right way to send these boys away. The ambassador of the king should come to take these boys away'. Silarai told Ashuk Gohain, 'Send some men to your father's kingdom and ask them to fetch you back home. I will then let you go in peace.' Ashuk Gohain sent some men to the kingdom. On receiving the news, our king sent Latau with two elephants laden with presents of gold and silver and other gifts to the Koch kingdom. The king died soon after having reigned for sixty one years. 157

Burha Raja[166] when he ascended to the throne, ordered Lekai Chetia to identify the false brahmans who had donned on the sacred

166. His Tai-Ahom name was Susengpha and his Hindu name was Pratap Singha.

thread to become brahmans at the time of Silarari's invasion of our kingdom. He asked to de-thread them. Lekai Chetia started this task to identify the real brahmans from the fake ones. 158

Thereafter, Silarari, after receiving permission from the Koch king, Naranarayan, set free the prince, Ashuk Gohain and the other three sons of the three Gohains. The Koch king also sent his ambassador with a letter. The letter read, 'Since the age old peace between the Ahoms and the Koch had been disrupted recently, to remedy it once again, we are sending back the royal captives whom we brought from your kingdom. And to maintain this friendship we are sending one of our maidens to serve you, o king.' The Koch envoy reached Kajali. On receiving news of their arrival, the king sent Latau along with other nobles to receive them. They welcomed the Koch envoy and brought them to our court. 159

The king asked his officers to present the men sent by the Koch king. The officer, Latau, gave an unintelligent reply to the king. This made the king realize that our officers were not up to the standard of a royal court and he decided to replace these Ahom kotokis with brahman kotokis. He recruited his men from the families of the Kaliya, Satubharja, Dharadhar, Santibar, Ekadoh, Thakori, Ramkandoli, Barguru, Sagarkandali, Barkandoli, Sutkandoli, Madhavkandali, Hitoliya, Birina, Nirah - in all fifteen brahmans were appointed from fifteen brahman households as the new kotokis. 160

The traders of the region were all settled in the region of Namdang and on the bank of the Dikhou. Since the Bhotias lived there, the place is known as Bhotiapur. Now the king gave them a more elevated position. When he received the letter from Naranarayan, he was delighted and expressed that the letter said all that he had hoped for. He also agreed to receive the Koch maiden in his household. He asked the Koch envoys to stay in the palace and later sent them off with expensive gifts and presents. He sent Bar Guru Kotoki to the Koch kingdom to escort the princess and also sent numerious presents to the bride. Thereafter, the relationship between the Koch and our king became cordial. 161

Consequently, the king defeated the Bara Bhuyans and captured them. The Sungis were also defeated. The seven enemies of the Ahoms were defeated and all of their domains were

incorporated into our territory and constituted into one big kingdom. They were: the Chutia, Kachari, Kamateshwar, Turkbaksh, Patilajaha, Egharehindur, Bara Bhuyan, Sungi - in all eight kingdoms. To commemorate this event, an octagonal silver coin was issued.[167] Thereafter, Suwatal Garh[168] was constructed. 162

In the reign of Burha Raja, Mumai Tamuli was appointed as the Bar Barua.[169] One day, the king toured from Dalguri to Charaideo on his elephant and inspected the laying of the tracks for a road between the domains.

He was accompanied by the Barua who removed the posts no sooner had he laid them. On noticing that they were missing, the king asked who was removing the posts that he was planting. The Bar Barua replied that he was doing so. The enraged king asked the Barua to come into the Parbat Ghar and explain the reason. The Barua replied, 'There are many men here who are from the enemy kingdoms. They are noticing that to make a small alley the king has to come and do the task himself. They will think that the king is too weak and insignificant, that he does not even have his own ministers to perform these small tasks. This poor impression will travel to other countries if I do not do what I am doing, that is picking up the posts behind you. If I cannot serve the king by performing some tasks why have I been given this name and position?' When the king heard this he was very happy and rewarded the Bar Barua with a pair of golden earrings and said, 'Since my uncle has done such a good job, I appoint him as my minister.' 163

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167. The minting of coins in the early stage of the Tai-Ahom administration served the decorative needs of the royal court. However, in the later phase of the Tai-Ahom rule, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Assamese coins were used in foreign trade, mostly in the transactions with Tibet. This does not mean that the internal system was monetized. According to N.G. Rhodes probably silver coins were minted and made out as offerings to the temples (Refer to N.G. Rhodes, *Suryya Kumar Bhuyan Memorial Lecture*, 24th October 1994, Guwahati).
168. Suwatal houses were made with low doorways and stunted roofs. This ensured that the visitors always bowed before the host. It was initially a royal prerogative. During my field trip (April 1994) to the Kebang Saudang Gaon in Chinamara, I learnt that Saudangs also build suwatal homes. This they learnt from the Tai-Ahoms according to their own admission.
169. The main duty of this officer was to organise the Tai-Ahom militia against the Muslim invaders.

He asked the Barua to make a survey of the people in the kingdom and divide them into groups.[170] The ministers replied, 'This is something that needs to be done. But this is not an easy task.' Three nobles were necessary to do this job. The king agreed to depute three nobles to assist his uncle perform the task. All young men and women of the kingdom were to be divided among the three nobles and placed under their supervision. The Barua replied, 'There are not enough people to settle and do this task. But it is your royal wish. I will put all the men to this task. But you should wait for the completion of the job.' The king agreed that he will not ask until the work was completed. The census work was undertaken and the various peoples in the kingdom were counted. Those who were in the kingdom, but were outside the regular settlements were now put together. Three men formed a Got, twenty of them were Boratu, hundred of them were Saikiatu and a thousand under a Hazarika. In this way the entire people of the kingdom were counted and categorized. The subjects asked the eldest daughter of the king to represent their grievances against this compulsory division and settlement. The king did not pay any attention to this complaint. The king summoned the three Gohains and directed that they should distribute the people according to the position of the commander. A specific number was to be designated for the king. Also a specific number was assigned for the prince, princess and the nobles. Moreover, it was specified that the archers were to be given eight pura land each, the ordinary paiks were given seven pura each. Twenty worthy paiks were to be given twenty puras of land to enable them to serve the Bora. This was made the rule of the domain. Seven arm lengths constituted a plot. Four inches were to be kept for the boundary between the plots. In this way the Gohains divided the land according to the regulation and placed the men according to the recent arrangement. 164

The king summoned the Bailung, Deodhai, and Gonak to read his stars, that of his sons, his ministers and of the kingdom on the whole. The pandits informed that everything was fine with the king and his kingdom, but his chief minister should be removed from his office. He should be put to death. The king replied, 'I can't do that,

170. The first census was done in the reign of Suhungmung or Dihingiya Raja after the Tai-Ahoms invaded the Chutia kingdom, and annexed the region and many new peoples within their domain.

the minister is my uncle. If he dies why should I be king. Isn't there any way to avert the disaster?' They replied, 'If you can without the knowledge of any other person capture the entire family and the household servants of the minister and also confiscate his wealth, and confine him to a prison for one year, you can avert disaster.' The king agreed and forbade everyone from uttering a word about this matter. The wife of the minister was captured and put in the weaving and spinning house, the sons were confined in the elephant stables, his wealth was confiscated and stored in the main treasury and the other members of his household and his slaves were kept in Joikhamdang. The Bar Barua himself was imprisoned in the Bhangighar. No one could understand the reason for this arrangement. The Bar Barua was himself baffled by the king's action and inquired what was his offence for such a punishment. The guards told him that they knew nothing about the reason. After a year, the Bar Barua was released and was reinstated to his old position. The king told him, 'Uncle a time had come when I was asked to kill you due to the bad influence of the stars, but I decided to imprison you to keep you away from the kingdom. Please do not lament over the past year.' During that time, Hati Puwali Gohain Bhitoruwal Phukan was put in charge of the local administration. 165

The king sent Sitaliya Kotoki to the Jaiantia kingdom to inquire about their well-being and general condition. The Jaiantia king informed that he would give a princess to our king if he could take the Jaiantia princess through the seven Kachari villages. When the ambassador came and told this to the king, he called his three important ministers and asked for their advice. The ministers said, 'Presents however ordinary should not be refused. A princess who is gifted should not be forsaken.' They advised that an ambassador should be sent to the Kachari kingdom to find out if they will permit our king to cross their territory to escort the Jaiantia princess. The Kacharis refused. When our king heard this he summoned his three ministers, Parbatiya Sawpet Bura Gohain, Khanpat Bar Gohain and Laku Maranpatra Gohain and asked for their suggestion. They conferred among themselves and told the king that if the Kacharis refused to give the right of way to us, then they should be removed by force and the Jaiantia princess should be escorted through the Kachari domain. 166

Sundar Gohain Naobaisa Phukan at the head of twenty thousand men proceeded to perform the task. But the Phukan was comfortable with the king's decision and asked for further assistance. The king understood his intentions and decided to put his wife, Khar's daughter in the chang.[171] 'I have appointed your brother Bhaga as the Bar Gohain. If you serve me well, I will reward you with vast territory.' Bhaga Bar Gohain was recalled from Metaka[172] and was informed of the new decision. Sundar Gohain proceeded rather unhappily. Nonetheless, he went on his mission which he successfully completed. He brought the Jaiantia princess through the Kachari territory to Maring and from there sent word to the king. The king sent Sawpet Gohain to escort the princess from that place. To Sundar Gohain, the king sent a message that he should first defeat the entire Kachari people before leaving the place. Khar's daughter was kept in the chang. Sundar Gohain was saddened to hear this. The Kachari prince acceded to defeat and was contemplating to surrender. Early one morning, finding his chance, the Kachari prince mounted on an elephant and came to the banks of the river to give battle to us. Khamsin Bar Gohain came and fought the Kachari forces. The Gohain was killed in the battle. The Kacharis mounted their elephants and entered Sundar Gohain's camp where they crushed him to death. When the king heard this, he brought down Khar's daughter and let her build her own house. Having suffered such humiliation the two sons of Sundar Gohain, Akhek Gohain and Kera Gohain, fled to Bengal. 167

One Piksatra came to our king and informed him that the Bengali army had occupied the Koch territory. Their commander Sattrajit came to Kalang and captured the treasures and the dancing women of the deoghar in Hala.[173] One of their traders named

171. Chang is the stilt house which was the royal abode of the Tai-Ahom Swargadeo. In this context we have to assume that taking Khar's daughter into the chang meant she was made a harem woman. It was a punitive act which was directed against Sunar Gohain. His wife had to undergo the punishment to remedy the mistake committed by her husband.

172. Rangpur was previously known as Metaka. Rudra Singh made his capital here and renamed it Rangpur. (See *Agar Ding Etiyar Ding*, pp. 18-24, B3 MS-15, S.K. Bhuyan Library, Guwahati).

173. The institution of devadasi was quite popular in Assam. A devadasi of the Negheriting daul became the Bor Raja in the Tai-Ahom kingdom having married the king Siva Singha. She was the (in) famous Phuleshwari Devi.

Ratanshan established himself at Singari. The king replied, 'It appears as if they are trying to find ways and means to capture the kingdom, too'. He sent his men to capture the trader Ratanshah. But he had fled. Two of his men were captured and his wealth was confiscated by the king. 168

The king consulted with his three ministers and said, 'We will soon have to fight the Bengali forces. Already we are at war with the Kacharis. What should we do?' The ministers said, 'If we start war with the Bengalis without reaching some settlement with the Kacharis it will cause us a great deal of harm. We should send Sitaliya Kotoki to the Kacharis and convey our goodwill and protection.' The king replied, 'You all do it in such a way that the Kacharis think that I am not involved in this.' The ministers called Sitaliya Kotoki and said, 'Go and tell the Kacharis that you have been sent by the three ministers. Tell them that they should not fear, although Khansingh Bar Gohain was killed by our people, namely Sundar Gohain. Even our king is very happy with our suggestion and says that the Kachari domain should be left intact. He says that he had not asked his men to kill the Kacharis. He had asked his men to escort the princess through the Kachari territory. On this account the Kacharis had fought against the king.' When the Kacharis were told this, their chief came to our court and presented the king with a number of horses and elephants. He was received with due respect and, in turn, he was given many gifts. In that year Sawpat Gohain died. Thakbak was made the Gohain. 169

Ratanshah fled to the Bengali camp where he reported all the happenings to Sattrajit. He accompanied Syed Babakar, Syed Sala, and Aliyar Khan to the banks of the Bhodori and their they gave fight to our men. The enemy had full information of our military plans being informed by the two prisoners, Akhek and Kera Gohain. Our army could not break into the line of the Bengali army and they sent word to the king for advice. At that time the king was in Kukurakata. He sent word to the ministers that if any one among them can kill or capture a couple of important Bengali generals, than he would make that person the Bar Gohain of the kingdom. When Bhadari Chetia conveyed this message our forces marched against the Bengali army and killed many men. Nine of the local chiefs of the territory were captured and imprisoned in a fort. When the king received this news he was happy and said he would be

delighted to partake in the success of his men. One of the Bengali soldiers attacked our men and killed twenty four of them. The three ministers and the Sawlai Konwar, anticipating this would trigger more problems, quickly put to death the captured Bengali chiefs. 170

When the king was informed he was enraged. Sawlai Konwar and the three ministers were put to the death and the other nobles with them were imprisoned in the elephant stable. Three nobles were asked to proceed by land to fight, once again. Sri Phal Bora was made in charge of the naval forces. Once again, the entire army faced the Bengali army. Sri Phal Bora told the three nobles, 'You three have been sent to assist and witness the real battle'. They were angry and replied, 'an officer who is subordinate to us, who is our servant, speaks beyond his position'. They themselves proceeded against the Bengali army. The Bengalis began to run pen mall. A cannon shot hit Thakbak Gohain and killed him. The elephants began to run amuck. Sri Phal Bora was trampled by the elephants. When the king heard this he said, 'This is not an ordinary spot. In this spot we have fought the enemy army. We should build a fort there.' Devaliya paiks were employed to build a fort there under the supervision of Tyaolung Gohain. 171

The Bengali Sultan appointed Sattrajit as the Thanadar of Dhubri. The position was conferred by Islam Khan of Dacca. He tried to make friends with Langi Phukan. He sought political acceptance from us. The king replied, 'If he was my son, he would have suckled my wife'. So saying he sent to him some fine cloth for a dress, for his wife one set of silk mekhala chaddar, a golden kamarbandh and also some salt and rice. He said, 'I have sent these clothes for you to wear. The food is of the kind produced in my country. The vessel with the spout is like the breast of my chief wife, drink water from there. Until pepper does not become sweet respect my wishes.' When Sattrajit received these gifts, he ate the food and drank water from the vessel, and also donned the clothes sent by the king. He promised to stand by his friendship and pledged that if he disregarded the arrangement the goddess Lakshmi would punish him. He also sent his ten year old son to our court. The king asked Parbatiya Khanpat Bar Gohain to raise the child. The Bar Gohain said it was not right to keep the son of another man in his house. So he did not adopt the child. The king

then asked the other two Gohains to raise the boy. They agreed. The king presented them with gifts and sent them back. 172

Sattrajit was removed from his position and the Bengal Sultan appointed Aliyar Khan as the Thanadar. He was asked to establish his headquarters on the border of Dhubri and the Manas river. Sattrajit was moved to the frontier outpost. The reason for this transfer was due to Sattrajit's growing friendship with us. Nawab Islam Khan of Dacca sent his men with presents to our court. But Sattrajit did not let them pass after consulting with Langi Phukan. The Nawab sent world to the king saying that 'I have sent my men with gifts and money worth one lakh. But they were not allowed to visit your court. Someone captured all the gifts and drove my men away.' 173

This was reported to our king by one of his men. The king made inquiries about this and finding proof of the Phukan's involvement had him killed for his treacherous action. He sent word to the Sultan saying, 'It appears that Sattrajit has cheated me. So I have dealt with him.' He sent Gabhoruwal Chandra Narayan to Aliyar Khan who was put up in Koroibari. But Chandra Narayan decided to deceive his host and entered the Bengali territory. When Aliyar Khan realized this he sent his men to our court asking the king to recall his man, Chandra Narayan. The king refused to give up the territory occupied by Chandra Narayan. This was one reason for the resurgence of tension between the Bengalis and us. 174

Kahu Hazarika was sent along with Chandra Narayan to establish our frontier in Darrang. From there, Chandra Narayan sent the Hazarika to the Neog Phukan's[174] camp and informed that they were posted there by the king. 'We have come to fight the Bengalis.' The Phukan deputed four thousand men and placed the Hazarika to command this force against the Bengali army. They proceeded to Koroibari and killed a few of the Bengalis there. Sattrajit, the frontier officer, sent a message to our king. The king replied, 'How do I know how the men from Dacca have been killed?' He replied, 'This is because of the fight between the two

174. The Phukans were apparted as administrators of territorial divisions or incharge of the civil and military department. About fifty different Phukans were in-charge of various divisions of the administration. The office of Neog Phukan was one of them.

armies. This is the reason for the sudden killing of the Bengali inhabitants of the region.' 175

After deliberations, a few Bengali traders came to Darrang. Once again, Sattrajit sent his men to inform this to the king. At that time a vermillion coloured dog came along with them. The king refused to surrender the newly occupied territory of Saranagotok. This was another reason for continued tension between the Bengalis and us. 176

In the meanwhile, the two Ahom youths, Kera and Akhek, were asked to teach the Bengali ways and manners in our court. The Bhandari Chetia came to the king and reported, 'Swargadeo, you are harboring your own doom here. Their mother is in the chang and they are with the Bengalis. It is not advisable for you to keep them here.' The king replied 'But they do not appear to be having any treacherous ideas'. The officer replied, 'A bitter plant produces bitter fruits'. Finally, the two boys were killed under the pretense of sending them for a deer hunt with the other officers, and in this way the problem was eradicated. 177

Aliyar Khan asked Gaspuria Sanatan and Salar Kanu, the two Ahom ambassadors, how far was their king's domain. The ambasadors replied, 'It is about two month's journey'. Bhalai's son, Duwaria said, 'This is a lie, it is about eight days journey'. The ambassadors said, 'Our king was informed of this by the Badshah of Delhi. But if you want to believe what this Duwariya has to say, very well.' The Kotokis came back to their king and reported the incident. The king was relieved and asked what else did they know. They said they could say no more. Sanatan said, 'When your majesty catches wild elephants these animals are put away in an enclosure. If you let them be, we cannot know whether they will be in the stable or go back to the jungles? If your servants are sent to foreign lands and they die there, will you leave the family of the dead servant to roam in foreign lands? Sons and daughters are part of their parents family. Their togetherness ensures their family pride.' When the king learnt of the deception of Bhelai's son, he put him to death immediately. 178

Mumai Tamuli Bar Phukan proceeded to Sala. In the meantime, the Bengal forces under Mirza Jahina, Mirza Makoy, and Aliyar Khan halted at Barakrayni. On learning of the mobilization

of the Bengali army, Mumai Tamuli sent his ambassador to the Bengali camp inquiring the reason why they were camping there. 'We have no bad intentions. If you give us the right to pan gold from the river,[175] catch elephants from your jungles, collect agar wood and pepper from your forests, we will not fight you.' When Mumai Tamuli heard this he informed the king, 'The fort here is unprotected. We do not have any archers, stockade or a bastion against the enemies. If these problems are not taken care of before we decide to fight the Bengali army it will cause us a great deal of harm.' He also sent his ambassador to the Bengali camp saying, 'Whatever you have mentioned, we have those in abundance in our country. But our king is a vassal. He cannot give permission to use any of these things on his own will. The country of his overlord is quite far, it is at six months journey and can be reached in three months if one traveled day and night. Please wait where you are. We will send our men to inquire what we can do. We should not engage in warfare without getting permission.'[176] After three months of preparations he sent his men, once again, to the Bengali camp and this time said, 'We will not give you even a grain of what you have asked. We will not even give you the elephant dung. Not even a seed of pepper or a twig of agar wood.' The Bengalis attacked immediately. Mumai Tamuli attacked the Bengalis with his naval force which was well equipped with artillery. Many Bengali soldiers were killed. Our men captured their treasures, boats and other war booty. The Bengali army was chased as far back as the Manas river. 179

From Diju to Udmari there was no fort for a stretch of four thousand yards. Mumai Tamuli decided that forts should be constructed along that stretch. He sent an envoy to the king. He told his messenger, 'If Tamuli Doloy's son is in the court do not speak in his presence. Talk about other things.' The kotoki went to

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175. There are no gold mines in Assam. However, a considerable amount of gold was panned from the rivers, namely the Dikrung and the Subansiri. Sonowal paiks were employed to do this task.

176. The Raja of Assam was one among the many lords who annually sent peshkash to the Dalai Lama in Tibet. As well, trade was an important means of communication between the two kingdoms. The reference to an overlord is dubious probably but it cannot be discounted that Tibet continued to wield political power in the Lauhitya valley. (See R. Reid, *Years of Change in Bengal and Assam*, London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1966).

the king and related the entire message. The king asked, 'What has the brahman's son told you?' To this the kotoki replied, 'I can tell you the rest only in strict confidence'. The king asked, 'Who has said that forts should be built along the path from Diju to Udmari?' Doloy son said, 'The Bengali forces can come through the forests, too. Why should we put our people to such trouble for no reason?' The king agreed and refused to employ his men to construct the necessary forts. When the Phukan heard this he was dismayed and said, 'One day the Bengali army will annex our territory because of the carelessness of our men.' 180

In saka 1563, Bhaga Raja received a messenger from the Kachari king, Jahmanik, who expressed his desire to receive a princess from our king. When the king heard this he was enraged. The Bar Gohain noticing that the king was not happy with the message demanded that the messenger be driven out of the royal court. The king took in marriage one Larima. The three ministers opposed this but to no avail. One day, when the king was touring the Charaideo hills he heard a voice say that he had done a bad deed which will incur divine punishment on him and he will loose his wealth. When the king heard this he returned to the capital. He left Larima and took a Chutia princess in marriage and adopted her son. This boy was designated as Konwar, given a sedan chair and he received several sets of royal clothes. The boy died after seven months. The king sent word to the ministers that along with the burial of his son, they should give the three sons of the three ministers and six sons of the six Phukans.[177] But the Gohains refused, saying, 'Why should we give our sons to accompany a Chutia?' 181

The sick prince was declared as heir apparent. Inspite of his dying condition, the workers employed in constructing his tomb were prohibited to proceed with their work.[178] The king said, 'I am a sick man, how can I be your king? However, since you insist I will accept the position.' They came to pay their respects to him and

177. Although the practice of burying live people, including personal servants, with the Swargadeos was a common practice, this appears to be the first instance when a demand was made for the burial of companions along with a crown prince. This was offensive to the populace and the ministers.

178. Tombs were generally built by the successors of the deceased. In Assamese they are called *maidam*. It was a ritual for the 'worship of ancestors.'

thus he was made their king. Bhaga Raja decided to contest this. He made secret preparations to fight. But he could not carry out his plan. He ruled for two and a half years. 182

After his ascension, Nariya Raja[179] sent Hukulahudu Bura Gohain, the Bar Gohain and the brother of the eldest princess, Sariho Gohain, to catch the Sungis.[180] He also appointed three men as Dihingia Gohains. Our force decided to wait for the Sungis in hiding. Like us, the Sungis pretended they were collecting firewood, but brought along with them other weapons like bows, arrows and axes with which they killed a number of our men. Hariho Gohain said, 'I have been told by the prince that these man are like robbers. They are difficult to catch. We should return.' This was a crafty design. Our men returned and the Sungis followed in their chase. On entering our territory they were captured and the king imprisoned them in the elephant stable. The king ordered that our men should be where they were and wait for his orders. Hariho Gohain told the king that he had only tried to follow the example set by his superiors. The others had left, so he also followed them. The king removed the Bura Gohain from his position and appointed Hariho Gohain as the Bura Gohain. In five year, two thousand Sungi paiks were incorporated in our administration. 183

A messenger was sent to the Kachari domain. The message from our king read 'It was we who have made you the king in your domain. Your should not forget that.' When this was conveyed, the Kachari king sent one Majumdar saying, 'The Swargadeo has gifted us with a number of things in the past. Now, he should present us a princess.' The Majumdar reached Kaliabar and halted there. In that year the king died. It was saka 1570. He ruled for seven years. In his reign an aruwan covering was introduced.[181] 184

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179. Nicknamed 'the sick king'.
180. Some say this was a Kachari community, while others think they were an autonomous group of Daflas whose domain was bounded by mountains on the north, the Brahmaputra river on the south, in the east was Bihali and the southern boundary line was the Bhairav river (D. Borgohain, 'Saumarat Chowlung Suikkapha', in *Rangpur, A Commemorative Volume*, Assam Sahitya Sabha, vol. 59, 1993, p. 167.)
181. Aruwan or Aluwan is part of male clothing in Assam. It is a fancy shawl with a decorative border. Also Aruwan is used as a covering to enclose a space for public assembly. It functioned as a temporary wall.

In the reign of Jayadhvaj Singha, the Kachari Majumdar was summoned. The three ministers were called to give him a send off. They took him to the elephant stable and said, 'You have to leave your men and animals here and take this message to your king'. He was accompanied by two of our men - Ram and Laluk. This messenger had brought the letter from the Kachari king, Saranweshwar which asked for the gift of a woman. The king agreed, provided the Kachari king kept his part of the promise. The Majumdar informed that his king would not come personally to receive the princess from the Swargadeo. To this our king replied, 'Very well, even among the common people the tradition is that the bride-groom comes to receive his bride. If the king cannot come himself let him send his brothers or another close relative to escort the princess to his kingdom.' This was conveyed to the Kachari king. The king said, 'I do not have my own brother, my son is not able to do the task. Who will go?' When the king heard this he asked Tangsu Barua to talk to the Kachari envoy and to put the blame on them for mismanaging the arrangement. Tangsu Barua could not do as he was directed. The king ordered that the messenger should be chased out of our kingdom. Tangsu Barua was removed from his position and Sengdhar was appointed as the new Barua. In saka 1573, they dug a pond in the area where the Batiyas lived. 185

In Saka 1583, the Bengal Khan, Khana Nawab Dalal Khan, and his men came to Bhangagarh and from there sent their men to the Bar Phukan demanding that we should leave Guwahati. The Phukan replied, 'We have occupied it after defeating Prananarayan.[182] If you can defeat him, we will surrender.' The Bengali army defeated Prananarayan and then sent word, once again, to our men to leave the place. The Phukan replied, 'Why should we surrender without a fight?' The Khan Khana replied, 'This is a gross lie'. They decided to fight our forces in Guwahati, which they later occupied. The king sent Bejdoloi as the commander to fight the Bengali army.[183] Seeing him, the Phukan

182. The Koch king was the predominant ruler in the region between the Tai-Ahom kingdom and the Nawab of Bengal.

183. He was the first (Kayastha) Hindu who was appointed as the Parbatiya Phukan. He had to lead the Tai-Ahom troops against the Bengali army. The office of Phukan all along was the prerogative of only Ahom men (K. Barua,

was encouraged to carry on the battle. Bahgarhiya Arjun Gohain was made the Khanikar Barua Bar Gohain. Our forces, both the navy and infantry men, came to Samdhara. The Bengali army decided to leave. They were escorted out through Diju by the local peoples of the place. At the same time Barukiya Bar Gohain's house was set on fire. The Bengalis marched toward our men, who fled. The Bura Gohain fought for sometime but unable to withstand the onslaught of the enemy forces, fled from the field. The Bengalis occupied the town. Many of their men proceeded on the upstream course along the Lohit. The Bura Gohain fought them at Murkata. In this battle two Bengali Umraos were killed. The Bengalis were shaken. Seeing these unusual happenings and fearing that our men were totally defeated, the Bura Gohain fled the field and was carried by his men. Khan Khana pursued the fleeing forces and came all the way to Bahbari. 186

In saka 1583, on the ninth day of Saut, on a Tuesday, the king was on his way to Namrup, when he was accosted at Dalguri by a group of dums and poharis[184] who accused him that he was merely involved in his own pleasures and amusement. They complained that, 'If you were more concerned about the condition of this land, the state of affairs would have been much better. But you did not care for people like us.' When the king heard these accusations from the fishermen and petty traders he was greatly disheartened. He went to Charaideo to pay respect to his ancestors and wept there. He implored, 'Save me this time and bring me here so that justice can be done. In the past we have been generous to many and given them many rewards. I have not heard such accusations before. In this time of trouble I have been accused by petty men. My god, I do not know what you have in store for me.' 187

The king proceeded to Namrup, leaving Rahgarhiya Bura Gohain to resist the Bengali forces. Barukiya Bar Gohain did not accompany the king, but took refuge in a Naga village and Bahbariya Barchetia left Samdhara and stayed with the Kacharis. 188

'Assamar Itihasa: Kalita Hazarikar Vamsavalir Prahangat', *Ajir Assam*, , March 21, 1992).

184. Men and women belonging to the fishing community, which is generally considered as low caste in Assam.

Baduli Phukan joined the Bengalis and did a lot of harm to us. The Bura Gohain was successful in defeating and killing a lot of Bengali soldiers in a number of places but he could not chase them away. The Bengalis were able to establish a military outpost in Bakubari. At this juncture, the Bura Gohain joined the king. The king said, 'I thought you have left my services'. The minister replied, 'Swargadeo, we are your servants. We will never leave you.' He also made arrangements for recalling all the other royal officers from their different hideouts. The king said, 'Gohain, it appears that the Great Lord has totally forsaken me'. The Gohain replied, 'Your Divine Majesty should not get disheartened so easily. Defeat and victory are a part of every day life. When the Great Lord will be favourable to you then you will be able to decisively defeat the enemy.' The king said, 'Gohain, I am much relieved listening to you'. 189

The Bura Gohain was sent to the Bengali camp to work out an arrangement with them so that they would leave our territory. The Bengalis demanded five lakh of silver and ninety elephants. 'Only if you give us these as tribute we will leave the region.' The Bura Gohain replied, 'Many of our men fearing for their lives fled to the mountains. They have taken with them all the royal treasures. Once we recover them we can make further arrangements.' The Bengali Nawab replied, 'Very well, if you cannot pay us the tribute right now give us one of your princesses for the royal harem in Delhi. Also give us the three sons of the three Gohains and another son of the Bura Gohain. We will then return to our kingdom.' The Bura Gohain sent this message to the king and made arrangements to send a princess to the Delhi Badshah. Along with the princess a number of slaves and other presents, including horses and elephants were sent to the Delhi court. The three sons of the three ministers and the son of the Bura Gohain, Mowpiya, were sent to Delhi. The Bengal Nawab returned to his domain. The Swargadeo came back from Namrup to Bokota. The Bar Gohain went to receive the king and pay his homage. The king struck him with his hengdan and killed him. In saka 1585, the king passed away after ruling for fifteen years. 190

His brother-in-law Saringiya, became king. At that time, two ambassadors, Durbeg and Rustom Beg, were sent from the Delhi court to meet with our king. Our ambassador, Bahbariya Kotoki,

who had accompanied the princess to Delhi returned with them. Many others accompained them. When they learnt of the demise of the former king, they sent message to Rashid Khan. They said, 'The Swargadeo is dead. Now to whom do we give the Surpaw?[185] Rashid Khan replied that it should be given to the present king. This was conveyed to the king by Bahbariya Kotoki.

When the Swargadeo heard that the men from the Delhi court had halted at Daergaon, he said, 'My ancestors were never subordinate to anyone. I cannot wear their robe of vassalage'. He ordered that the envoys should be sent back. The Bahbariya Gohain advised the king that at this time he should not be emotional, rather, he should accept what they have brought and keep it in a place of respect simply to please the enemy. This would be for the benefit of the kingdom. The king agreed to this suggestion. The Gohain sent some officers to escort the men from Delhi who were in Daergaon. Our kotoki told Durbeg and Rustom Beg that they should follow the norms of the court in the presence of the Swargadeo. He gave them two hundred pieces of gold and two thousand pieces of silver too. They replied that they will follow his advice. In the meantime, the Bura Gohain seated the king in the Hulung[186] and asked the kotoki to present the two ambassadors in the court. The kotoki asked the king to come a few steps forward and receive the present from the Delhi Badshah. To this the Bura Gohain replied that such an order coming from a servant was uncalled for. 'This is not the tradition in our country. We should not take the Surpaw of the mighty monarch without due respect. Give them to our men here. Our king will wear it in due time.' The surpaw was carried by the Kakurasuwa.[187] This was taken inside and put in the royal treasury. 192

In saka 1586, the king assembled his three ministers and other royal officers. He said 'None of my ancestors were subordinate to anyone. I cannot remain a vassal of anyone anymore. Drive the Bengalis from Guwahati and occupy that territory, once again.' The Bahbariya Gohain said, 'Since you are the king you are conscious of

185. A corruption of the term Sa-ra-pa.
186. The coronation hall of the Tai-Ahom Swargadeos.
187. A clan among the Ahoms whose duty was to read chicken bones so as to make predicitions about the future. This old Shamanist tradition continues to be practised in Assam, to this day.

the boundary of your kingdom. Only when your men respect your will it is considered they are strict in the performance of their duties. But the kingdom within is breaking. You should bring the various parts of the kingdom together and make a composite whole. You should see to their socio-economic condition, too. The most important element of any kingdom is its rice cultivation. If there is scarcity of staple food, subjects cannot perform any other tasks. The water-ways and the boats should also be attended to. You should not delay any further. Later, if there is discord among the people your punishment against them will be of no avail. Already there is shortage in the amount of food stored in the royal granary. How will you take care of the situation if you delay for two or three more years? The families of the paiks are using vessels which are meant for two people to cook one helping. Everything is a matter of trade. To protect against cheating, one has to check a number of times before one buys one's wares. The birds sit on trees and build nests where they raise their young ones. Only when the young ones are able to take care of themselves, they leave the nest. In the same way, only if you as a king can manage your own kingdom as best as possible, you can build a people who can defeat your enemies and maintain the integrity of the kingdom.' 193

The king accepted the suggestion of his ministers and ordered for the proper division of his men and their work. He ordered that the archers also should grow their own crop. The soldiers stationed in the town were assigned two tasks. In the evening they had to practice archery. The king regulated their tasks which he at times supervised himself. The archers were asked to practice their shooting, while the artillery forces practised the use of cannons. An inventory of the royal firearms was made. The king summoned his three ministers and said, 'Now that all this has been taken care of isn't it time we fight the Bengalis again?' The Bahariya Bura Gohain said, 'It is time to fight the Bengalis. But it would be judicious to first test the strength of our soldiers.' The king asked how this could be done. The minister replied, 'A road should be constructed from Teliadanga pond to Jaji. We can ascertain the capabilities of our men in this manner.' 194

In saka 1587, the king ordered his ministers to fight the Bengalis and drive them out of Guwahati. The ministers after taking leave of the king went to the Phukan and along with his men

marched to Itakuli and Pandu - Saraighat.[188] They drove the Bengalis as far west as the Manas river. The king was delighted to receive the news and sent a number of gifts to his officers. The Bura Gohain in consultation with Lachit Bar Phukan decided to build a fort in Guwahati about which they duly informed the king. In saka 1590, the king died. He ruled for seven years. 195

His younger brother became the king. In the meantime, the Delhi Badshah sent Ram Singh on an eastern campaign. The Mughal commander halted near the Manas river from where he sent his men to Lachit Bar Phukan demanding that he surrender Guwahati to the Mughals. He also asked for three lakh rupees. The Bar Phukan summoned the other Phukans and discussed the matter. They sent word to the king that Guwahati was in danger and they may have to surrender the fort. The king asked his three ministers to talk in details with the Bar Phukan. The Bar Phukan reasoned, 'If we leave Guwahati now, in future we will have to leave Garhgaon and retire to Namrup. Since Guwahati is the life line of our kingdom we cannot surrender it. We cannot be certain that Guwahati is all they want. The Badshah might have different desires later on. Also, if Ram Singh is replaced by another commander he might want other territories from us. Even if they are promising now how can we be certain?' The king appointed the Bura Gohain as the commander-in-chief of the forces at Guwahati and they were asked to drive Ram Singh and his men out of Guwahati. 196

Ram Singh when he learnt of our intention proceeded to Hajo, where he established a thana. Once again, he sent his envoy Panditray to the Bar Phukan saying, 'In the past Aliyar Khan had occupied Guwahati. Now return that territory to us'. The Bar Phukan replied, 'We had made an arrangment with Aliyar Khan. That is not applicable now. We cannot give Guwahati to Ram Singh.' So saying he sent two envoys - Nim and Ram Saran - to the enemy camp. Ram Singh asked the envoys, 'Was the message carried by Panditray of any consequence?' They replied, 'It was not good. In fact the situation is volatile.' 'Why?' asked Ram Singh. 'Since you took the outpost', they replied. 197

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188. Situated near Guwahati.

Panditray was questioned what were his impressions of the officers. He replied, 'The Bar Patra Gohain, Bar Gohain, Bar Phukan and Bura Gohain - in looks and intelligence, age, and ability - look very capable. The Bura Gohain is young, healthy, handsome, steady, and invulnerable. In all matters he is clever quick and very calculative.' Ram Singh replied, 'So young and so clever'. Pandit Ray replied, 'Very cunning and able'. Ram Singh said, 'They are lucky to have such a worthy minister'. 198

They sent back our messengers with a letter and some opium.[189] The Bar Phukan received them and asked, 'What have your king Ram Singh said?' He replied, 'He says that the young Phukan and his army should give battle. If there is not enough war supplies I will provide.' This was reported to the Bura Gohain. Our men replied, 'Your king is very small. If your king as willing to fight, tell him to be prepared to fight for four to five years. If he does not have provisions for such a long time tell him we will provide.' So saying they ground the poppy seeds, put it into a bamboo pipe and sent it back. 199

In the meantime, the Bura Gohain and Lachit Phukan called all the soldiers and asked the archers, artillery men and the naval forces to be prepared to fight the Bengalis. But they advised that they should not take the initiative against the enemy. Anyone attempting to do so was threatened with punishment of death. After making these arrangments the Phukan took command of the southern flank, while the north was left to the Gohain to keep watch. The Bengali army proceeded up the river. A letter was sent which said that the Bar Phukan has made peace and does not want to fight. In turn, another letter reached the Bar Phukan which said that the Bura Gohain does not want to fight. Realizing that it was a trick our men under the command of the Gohain and the Bar Phukan got ready to fight the Bengalis. 200

The Bengalis thinking that the soliders of Assam have given up the fight came in their boats and entered the fort. Our soldiers

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189. Sometimes the nickname Kanikhuwa or opium eater is used for Assamese peoples. In Assam, opium cultivation was introduced much later, after 1783, when the British Agent, Colonel White, brought a troop of soldiers from north India to fight the Burmese in the eastern frontiers. The appellation Karikhuwa for a much earlier time is a misnomer.

said, 'We see two or four boats near the fort'. The Gohain replied, 'Let them come near, no one should shoot at them'. When they were close our men fired their canons and the Bengali soliders were taken by surprise. Many of them were carried away by the river. The Bengali army retreated to Hajo. They made tunnels leading to our forts and destroyed some. At Pandu, the Gohain and his forces remained alert. They quickly reparied the damaged forts. Ram Singh could not achieve much. He lamented that 'Anyone who comes to fight the people of Assam are bound to loose'. Thus he returned to his own territory. 201

The king took initiation from a foreign Bairagi[190] and asked everyone to do the same. Muyamara, Makajana, Hilikhatolor, and Sesamukhor - these four wise men were imprisoned in the elephant stables and asked to perfrom miracles if they wanted to save their lives. They replied, 'We cannot do anything extraordinary. We are simple people who spend our time in prayers and seek the blessings of the lord. We do not know more than that.' The king replied, 'My guru knows all about the spirits and other aspects of religion. Come and receive initiation from him.' Debera received initiation for the four men and promised to take revenge for the humiliation that was meted to them. He plotted with the Sarujana Raja and killed the Brahman Duari Barua, the Bar Barua and also the king. The Crown Prince became king and Debera became the Bar Barua.[191] The king had ruled for two years and five months when he was assassinated. 202

In saka 1596, Debera killed the Crown Prince and became an autonomous officer. The king had reigned for one year and five months. On the tenth day of Saut, on a Thursday, the prince of Samaguri was installed as the new king and the Morangi Barua's daughter who was married to him was forbidden to have sexual relationship with her husband. But learning that the couple had consumated their marriage, the king of Samaguri was assassinated

190. A nomadic mendicant.

191. In the Ahom language this functionary was called Phu-Ke-Lung. The Phu-ke-Lung was the chief judicial and revenue officer and his position was next to the Thao-Mung or the Governor of a province. In some respect he was equal to the Phu-Kang-Lung or the Bar Phukan. The Phu-Ke-Lung or Bar Barua resided in the capital city of Garhgaon. See J.N. Phukan's 'Titles'.

on a Tuesday, in saka 1597, the tenth day of Baishak[192] after reigning for twenty days. That very day, a Thugkhungiya prince was installed as the new king. Debera crushed Lawdeka to death at Barghat. 203

Kalangjur Betmela and Khotowal Chetia were sent to Guwahati to recall Laluk Bar Phukan. They conferred on this matter and in the evening returned to their own camp. Next day, a member of the Bura Gohain's family, Khamta, came to his camp. He related everything to the Bura Gohain and told him that he was sent to recall him. 'Lawdeka recalled the Ghura konwar, the Phukans and Hazarikas, who were all killed. Hence you should do as you think best.' Thereafter, the Bar Phukan, Pramukhya Phukan, Rajkhowa, and the Hazarikas came to the Bura Gohain and said, 'We are totally dependent on you, our lord. Please do not abandon us. Debera has assumed independence after putting to death the former kings. He will take the Phukans and kill them. He is taking over the powers of the king, isn't it? Debera is only a servant of the king. He should not do so, he has no right to do so. Hence we have come to ask you to be our leader and capture Debera.' Phul Barua's sons, Pani Phukan and Duara Kirkiriya Phukan were left behind along with a few Rajkhowas in Guwahati. The others proceeded to upper Assam under the leadership of the Bura Gohain. 204

When Debera learnt this he immediatley made preparation to face the rival party. From Kharikata duwar[193] to the banks of the Dikhou, from the east of the Dikhou to the Hahsara khat[194] and Darika, he planted wooden stakes which were hidden by a layer of soil above it.[195] He armed the local people and the captured Bengali soldiers. They mounted their horses and stayed on the alert at Mesaghar. At Borakhuwa duwar he placed Sengmun Bar Gohain, and at the Bahghar duwar he appointed Asuk Bar Patra Gohain. The Bura Gohain's men came and halted at Namdang. That very night Debera's men deserted him and ran away. Debera fled.

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192. In Assamese, it is referred to as Bohag.
193. The Tai-Ahom capital city was enclosed with doors which provided access to the inner precincts. Duwar is the Assamese equivalent for a door.
194. Khat is the cultivated area or the enclosed paddy fields.
195. This practice was also known to the Koches. It was a defensive practice to restrain the attack of mounted horsemen. (For details on the techniques of warfare see N. Hazarika, *Ahomar Ran Niti*, Guwahati: Chukafa Bhavan, 1990).

The Bura Gohain's army halted at the Hakbari. Debera was caught and imprisoned in the pig sty along with his principal wife. The younger wife, too, was caught. His brothers and other relatives were caught and put to death. In saka 1557, the Bura Gohain after consulting with the other officials decided to dethrone the Tingkungiya raja who was earlier placed on the throne by Debera. He had ruled for only a month. 205

A Dihingia prince was installed as the new king in Barnaohal, where he resided for six months. Kenduguriya Senggohain was appointed as the Bar Patra Gohain. At Dalguri, a royal coronation hall was constructed. The Bura Gohain stayed with the king, while the others returned to Guwahati. In Aghun, the king came to the coronation hall and ascended to the throne. That day, Guntimala Gohain's son, Laluk, was appointed as the Bar Gohain and Kirkiriya was appointed as the Bar Barua. For seven days there was merry making and rejoicing. The three ministers were presented with gifts. In saka 1597, in Phagun, an Aubar tree was also planted. 206

In saka 1598, in Ahar[196], Bahghariya Gohain, Laiphukan, Hukulanudu Bura Gohain's son, Bhatdhora, Mumai Tamuli's son, Lepat Phukan, Tepartaliya Herapuwar's son, Ram Phukan, Kirkiriya Bar Barua and the other officers assembled together and consulted among themselves. Before the break of dawn, the Bura Gohain went on his dula to the fort. He sent Bhatdhora Phukan to summon his son-in-law. The Bar Patra Gohain replied, 'I am not feeling well, I cannot come now'. The Bar Gohain waited at the door step. The others also waited in the front room. The Bura Gohain was still waiting in his dula. At that time one of the dula bearers entered through the princess' chamber and removed the main ladder from inside. The king came out to the outer room and hacked a few men. Hasang's relative, Ligira Bora, was hurt but survived the attack. Noticing that the king was in an angry mood the Bura Gohain alighted from the dula and hid himself. Assuming that there was someone inside the dula, the king attacked it. Betmela killed the royal water bearer, Sengpet, and fled with the royal water vessel. 207

196. The month covering the period between the fifteenth June to fourteenth July of the Gregorian calendar.

The Bura Gohain and Ram Phukan fled to Dilli. Next morning, they met with the Bar Gohain and the Bar Patra Gohain and asked them to gather all the fleeing officers together. Kirkiriya Barua and his men, the Hazarikas, gathered all the men together and proceeded to the hills. In the meanwhile, the king brought out the idol of Lakshmi Narayan, a Gita, and a basil plant to the courtyard and asked everyone present to make a solemn oath. The oath was also solemnised in the Ahom tradition. The Bar Patra Gohain said, 'I have not misbehaved earlier. Nor will I do so in future. I will not take an oath for this.' The king said, 'Whoever has a free conscience does not have to pledge his sincerity'. He presented the various officers with gifts according to their official rank and proceeded to the Teliyadungar pond from where he deputed the Bar Gohain, the Bar Patra Gohain, Halal Bar Gohain, Bar Chetia, the Bar Barua, Bar Gohain's relative, Laluk Phukan, Baghsuwal Bar Patra Gohain's elder brother, Laitaw Bhitaruwal Phukan, and other Rajkhowas and Hazarikas to Gajpur. 208

They went and halted there. In the meantime, accompanying the Bura Gohain, Phrimaar Laluk Bar Phukan, Halal Bar Gohain's son, Sekham, Dihingia Lepat Phukan's nephew, Thanuwa Deka Phukan, the Bar Gohain Miri-Handique,[197] the king's father-in-law's son, Saupika, Abhayapur Rajkhowa, Ranga Sila's son, Mesa Rajkhowa, a relative of Laluk Phukan, Harkina Rajkhowa, Doiangiya, Namdangiya Rajkhowa, Bar-Abhayapuria Rajkhowa, Jabang Gohian, Maju-Abhayapuria Rajkhowa Phaguna, Saru-Abhayapuria Rajkhowa, Lanmukhuru Bandar, Lepata Phukan's son, Alum Panidihingia Rajkhowa, and all the men in the Bar Gohain's employment moved from Guwahati to Lakhaut. From there they moved to Deogaon. 209

The king deputed Naba's son, Dulakaheriya Barua, to Gajpur asking him to convey a message to the Bar Gohain, Bar Patra Gohain, Halal Bar Gohain and Bar Chetia Gohain that the Bura Gohain should be brought to his presence. Bengana Ramkrishna

197. In the reign of Pratap Singha, Bhukula Gohain was re-settled in Dihing. He adopted a Miri boy and named him Miri Handique. Thus his progency was reffered to by this name. (For details on the genealogy of the various khels and officers of the Ahom administration see *Assam Buranji*, Ms. 59, D.H.A.S.; also *Assam Buranji*, B1/R6/A, S.K. Bhuyan Library, Guwahati).

Bapu arrived there and said that the king has asked him to ferry the four officials on his boat. But the boat could not hold more than three men. The Gohains set forth on their task and reached Devargaon after three days journey. 210

At the devaghar, the four Gohains met with the Bura Gohain and conferred with him. The Gohains told him what the king desired. They assured him that the king has conveyed to them that no harm will befall the Bura Gohain if he came to the court. To this, the Bura Gohain replied, 'Well, the king says so and so do you, that inspite of my crime I will not be punished. Why don't you rest today? I will meet with you again tomorrow.' That night the Phukan, Rajkhowa and the others met together and agreed to rebel against the king. The next day the four Gohains met, once again, in the elephant stable. Mesa spoke out, 'The Bar Gohain and Halal Bar Gohain - both should go to Kaliabar. The Bar Patra Gohain should remain with us.' The Bar Patra Gohain replied, 'I cannot agree to this'. The Bura Gohain agreed that he should not stay with them but should proceed to Kaliabar. The three Gohains were sent to Kaliabar and Lau Bar Chetia was left to take care of the premises at Devargaon. The rest, along with the Bura Gohan proceeded to Kaliabar. In the mean while, the king waited with his men and the Baruas in the fort at Cinatali. Both the parties fought there. The king was defeated and he came back to Garhgaon. 211

The officers of the lower kingdom followed in their pursuit to Garhgaon. They left Bhatdhara in charge and went to their respective abodes. Bhatdhara stoned the king to death. The next day, the Phukans visited the Bura Gohain who was seated on a raised platform and told him what had happened the previous night. The Bura Gohain ordered that Bhatdhara should be removed from his designated seat and placed on a lower tier, near the kitchen. The Phukans were asked to come to the chang and they conferred there. The king's son, Maju Gohain, was punished. His eyes were plucked out and he was banished to Namrup. Dhighala Gohain fled, Dhala Gohain, who was the younger Gohain, was also killed. This incident took place in saka 1598, on the twelfth day of

Haun.[198] The king had ruled for a year and two months and two days at the time of his assassination. 212

On the fifteenth day of Haun, Parbatiya Raja was installed as the king. The Bahbariya Kotoki was sent to recall the three Gohains from Kaliabar. Laluk Bar Gohain was removed from his position and in his place Mesaghariya Jabang Rajkhowa was made the Bar Gohain. Lau Barchetia was also removed and in his place Japarjalak was made the Barchetia.[199] Kirkiriya Barhetia fled to his house. Mesa was made the Bar Barua. The king built his temporary residence at Bukanagar. In saka 1599, on Friday, when thirty days of Bhado[200] had passed, the king ascended to the throne and there was celebration and merry making for seven days in the kingdom. At the time of his ascension he took the name, Sujinpha (Sudoypha).[201] The Bura Gohain complained to the king that Sudharihan Thakur's grandfather was giving shelter to Dhighala Gohain. Tepartalia Phukan was sent to capture and kill him. 213

Mesa Barua Patra and Jakaruwa Bar Khunwari were taken captive. On Monday, tenth Kati,[202] the Phukans captured Mesa and took him to the Bura Gohain's house. The Bura Gohain asked what he should do with Mesa. The Phukans replied, 'He is disobedient to the princes and to us, too. We do not want him as our Barua. If the king wants to retain him then he should release us from our responsibilities.' The Bura Gohain said, 'I will let the king know that you all do not want him as your Barua'. This was conveyed to the king and Mesa was removed from his position and in his place a clan member of Barhazarika, Chakrapani, was appointed as the Bar Barua. Mesa fled to Guwahati. In Aghun, the king went to the area

198. The month covering the period between the fifteenth of July to the fourteenth of August in the Gregorian calendar.
199. As the Tai-Ahom kingdom expanded more men were needed to manage the administrative affairs. Seven new families were incorporated into the administration. The seven additional clans were Lahan, Duwara, Dihingiya, Chetia, Handique, Lukurakhan and Makhat/Matangpha/Khamun (Ms. *Historical Notes*, compiled by Nandanath Deodhai Phukan, 1932, B1/R11/A, S.K. Bhuyan Library, Guwahati).
200. The month following Haun. It is from the fifteenth of August to the fourteenth of September in the Gregorian calendar.
201. There is no mention to his Hindu name in the buranjis.
202. The month covering the period from fifteenth October to fourteenth November.

of the Lohit river where he spent three months hunting and fishing. He returned to Garhgaon after three months of relaxation. 214

In Bohag, saka 1600, the king was attacked by a robber and was wounded, but he did not die. He lost his left thumb. He was wounded in five places. The robber left his knife in Marang's house and fled. In those days, the Raydangiya bhandar and the Parbatiya bhandar had two doors on either side.[203] The king imprisoned Marangi Ramdhan Tamuli Rajkhowa in the elephant stable as a punishment for the offence committed by him. When he was released he fled to Saraighat. This was one reason. 215

The Bura Gohain told the king, 'When the Bengalis had attacked us we could not find a place from where we could stage a direct attack on the enemy forces. Therefore, we should build a fort spanning the Tulashijan hills all the way to the banks of the Dihing. This we can do only if you support us.' The king agreed to this proposal. When this fort was completed it was named Sanmati (Sintamonigarh). This was another reason. 216

Laluk Barphukan in consulation with his brothers, Bhardhara and Marangi, sent Liksaw Gariya Bakas to the Bengal nawab, Manjur Khan, with a variety of gifts, like ivory, aloe wood, silk cloth and gold. They conveyed the message to the Nawab which said 'Come with a few hundred horses from the north and south and a fleet of forty or so boats. I will leave the fort to you if you agree to install me as the administrator of the kingdom of Assam.' The Nawab sent his men along with the two Ahoms to Azamtara, the Sultan of Dacca. Azamtara agreed to make Laluk the governor of Assam. According to the tradition he sent a royal Sur. He also agreed to give four lakhs of silver for the surrender of the fort at Guwahati. The two envoys came and related Azamtara's message to the three brothers. The Phukan sent his men to invite the Bengalis to invade Assam. In the meantime, he sent his envoy to the king informing of the impending Bengali invasion. At this time, the construction of the Sintamoni fort was still going on. The king ordered that further work should be stopped. Instead, he asked his ministers to proceed to Guwahati. In Phagun, saka 1600, the Bengali army proceeded but did not dare to enter the fort. Marangi,

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203. These were the state granaries.

the Phukan's brother proceeded to invite them into the fort. The other Phukans, Rajkhowas and Hazarikas halted at Lautali. 217

The locals fled the region. Baduli Phukan came to meet Laluk Phukan and reprimanded him saying, 'What have you done? This fort of Saraighat is otherwise invincible. Why have you let it go so easily? You have lost your own honour by your own doing. They wanted to give you four lakhs of silver. That you haven't taken. Nothing has been attained.' He spent the night there and went back the next day. 218

Laluk Phukan captured Pani Phukan, Mari Handique Khari Deka, Dikhoumukhia Rajkowa, Mesaghariya Bar Gohain's relative, Lesaikalia, from Lautali and sent them to the Bengal nawab's camp. From Garhgaon, the three ministers fled to Bishwanath.[204] Phukan Rajkhowa went to Duimunihila. The men from Saraighat halted at the same place. Laluk Phukan captured Garhgaonyan Phukan Hazarika. Tepartaliya Ram Phukan and Kalangur Betmela were captured. The latter was retained, while the others, Kuwaygaya Mau Gohain Phukan and Tepartolia Sunarimuwa, were sent to the Bengali camp. Fearing for his own life the Bura Gohain left Bishwanath, crossed the Lohit and proceeded northward to Lejubaja where he stayed in Ramraya's house. But he was caught. The Bar Patra Gohain stayed in Kenduguri. The Bar Gohain returned with his men to Kaliabar. Halal Bar Gohain accompanied him. The Bura Gohain was kept in Duimunisila. The Bar Patra Gohain was asked to construct a fort at Diju and the Bar Gohain was asked to repair a fort on the southern side of the Lohit. In saka 1601, the two Gohains were brought back to Kaliabar and the Bar Patra Gohain was sent to Dikhomukh. Kalanyu Betmela was imprisoned in the pig sty. One day, Betmela Phukan summoned Tepartolia Phukan to Dupdhar and asked him to spit on Phetai Betmela. Both of them were hacked to pieces in the village at Samdhara. Betmela's son, Sikun Railung's arms were cut off. He died that very night. 219

Laluk Phukan appointed his brother Maring as the Bar Barua and his son Jagarak was designated as a Phukan. Dhingia Lapeti Phukan's son, Alunak, was also designated as a Phukan. So too

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204. The Tai-Ahom outpost bordering the domain of the Darrangi Raja.

Lanmakhru.[205] The Bengalis sent back all the men they had taken captive from our court, except Mau Gohain, Suranrimuwa Gohain and Bamuniputek. Maringi Bar Barua, Alun Phukan and Mowpiya were sent to meet with the king. All this took five months. 220

The Bar Gohain was left at Kaliabar by the Bar Patra Gohain, and his brother Bhatdhara was appointed as the Bar Phukan. The Bura Gohain's nephew, Hatibarua Sengkham Gohain and his son Dihingia Rajkhowa were left with Bhatdhara. Kirkiriya was taken prisoner by Laluk Phukan. Halal Bura Gohain came along with them. Bhatdhara imprisoned the two men and left a guard to watch them. Laluk Phukan halted at Hakbari. He ordered that Mesa Bar Barua and Kirikiriya Phukan's eyes should be removed. In saka 1601, fifth Aghun, on a Thursday, a prince from Samuguri was installed as the Swargadeo. The next day, the newly installed king ordered for the assassination of the Parbatiya Raja as advised by his officers. The Parbatiya king had ruled for three years three months and five days. 221

The Samuguri king made his temporary residence in Lesang. All the Phukans came to pay their respect to the king in his residence. Following his advise they sent Metekatoliya Khuna Gohain, Saudang Bar Barua and the Bar Patra Gohain's relative, Bansengiya Khansang Gohain Saurak Saikia, to kill the Bura Gohain's nephew, Naobaisa Phukan. His son, Lankham caught the youth and killed him in the house in Bahgarh. Dilihiya Langi Gohain was made the Bura Gohain. The Phukans built another residence for the king at Alikekuri and returned to their own houses. Dihingi Kandi Deka was designated as a Phukan and sent to Kaliabar. The king asked the Bar Gohain to recall the Bar Patra Gohain. Both the ministers arrived in saka 1602 and paid audience to the king. 222

Azamtara sent a letter to Hula Phukan which said, 'Capture your king and send him here. Also capture the ministers and all your enemies. Let me know who are your good friends. Let peace

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205. Legend has it that when Sukapha halted at Tipam, a Moran presented him with some brinjals. In the Tai-Ahom language brinjals are called Makhru. This same Moran fought against the Nagas to defend the Tai-Ahom settlers. He was rewarded for his service and placed under Kangan Bar Gohain and re-named Lanmakhru. He started the lineage known as Lanmakhru (*Assam Buranji*, B1/R6/A).

and prosperity be with you. We will make you the king of the kingdom of Assam. Are you afraid of anyone?' The Phukan in order to receive the Muslim envoy donned the garments of the king which he took from the king's wardrobe and sat on the king's seat. The Boras and the Baruas who were in his party plotted and killed him. In saka 1602, on the tenth day of Aghun, he and many of his relatives were killed. 223

From Kaliabar, Bhatdhara went to Guwahati and met with Manjur Khan to whom he reported, 'My brother and friends have been killed by the Ahoms. I have come to you for protection. Please give me some people and help. I want to kill the Ahoms.' Manjur Khan replied, 'I cannot give you any assistance without the permission of the Badshah. Go to the court of the Badshah and implore for his help.' He sent Bhatdhara to Dacca. He requested the Badshah for his assistance. The Badshah said, 'You stay here. I will see what I can do.' Bhatdara stayed in Dacca. 224

The Phukans at Kaliabar decided to go to Guwahati and fight the Bengalis there. They asked the Bura Gohain, Barua, Phukan and Hazarikas to accompany them. The Bar Patra Gohain and Mowpiya Phukan stayed with the king. They assembled at Kaliabar and deliberated among themselves. Finally on Thursday, twentieth Haun, saka 1603, they installed Sri Sri Gadadhar Singha as the king. After twenty seven days they came and took Garhgaon. They made the king's residence on the bank of the lotus pond, inside the fort. The Samuguri king was captured and taken to the hills where he was killed. He had ruled for a year, eight months and fifteen days. On twenty first Phagun, Saturday, lightening struck the king's residence in the mountains. After twenty two days, on Monday at four Danta beli,[206] the king entered the royal chamber. He ascended the throne on the twenty fourth day. He took the Hindu name of Gadadhar Singh. The name was written on a golden cloth by the Majumdar and read out to the royal officers.[207] 225

206. A Tai-Ahom measurement of time which constitutes the sixtieth part of the day, equivalent to twenty four minutes.
207. A similar royal style was in vogue in the Thai court. (For details, see P. Esteri, 'Royal Style in Village Context', *Contributions in Asian Studies*, vol. xv, 1980, pp. 102-117).

On the twenty fifth day, one man was attacked by a cow in Sunapur but he was saved. On sixteenth Sot, Lu-bhandari was kidnapped by someone from his house. On the twenty third day, at four danta beli two suns were seen in the sky. On twenty seventh Aahar,[208] saka 1604, the king ordered for the execution of the Bar Gohain and also Aahina Muday's son. On second Haun, Manjur Khan was driven out of Guwahati and four men occupied the area. The Bura Gohain, Bar Gohain and Deka Phukan were deputed for this task and they defeated the Bengali army and also the naval fleet. On first Bhado they occupied Itakhuli at Saraighat. Manjur Khan fled and so, too, the two nephews of Ram Singh. 226

After five days had passed in Aghun, a group of bees built a nest in the king's palace. On the twenty seventh day, the king ordered that a pond should be dug at Tingkhang. After twenty seven days had passed, the Handique Neog, Bihpuruwa Phukan and Bahbariya Ramkrishna told the kotoki that, 'The Bhandar Bar Phukan and Phul Barua's son are making a pact'. This was reported by Ram Krishna to the king who at the time was in Charaideo hills. In saka 1605, the king summoned both of them and remvoed them from their office and sent them away. Handique Neog was appointed as the Bar Phukan. After eleven days had passed on ninteenth Bohag, Gidagathik and Tamuli were killed by Kharing. In another twenty days Bhatdhara who was formerly in the court of Dacca came back to our court. He brought along with him a Bairagi from Dacca whom he imprisoned in the elephant stable. On thirteenth Aghun, Dinaduya who was attempting to take the Patghar fell ill. After twenty days the king occupied the Patghar himself. On eleventh Phagun, a Friday, the land around the pond in Tingkhang was put under the plough. After twenty one days, three mahajan of Auniatiya, Bengenaatiya and Katanipariya were brought to Tingkan with due celebration and at twelve danta beli a wooden stake was buried in the pond.[209] In Saut, a door was built with stones. One side was done by the Ahoms and the other by the

208. From the fifteenth of June to the fourteenth of July.
209. These posts are called Nagkhuta and the tank is known as a *Nagmara Pukhuri*. Both the Tai-Ahoms and the Kacharis knew the technique of making *Nagmara Pukhuris*.

Bengalis.[210] In saka 1606, thirteenth Jeth, Sunday, the throne was installed in the Barhulung. 227

On a Wednesday, after thirteen days had passed the king informed Dhekiyal Betmela Saikia that Sundar Gohain's grandson, Umay Letha's brother and Lu-Bhandari's grandson, these men wanted to create mischief. After due deliberation having found them guilty of commiting a crime they were put to death. On the seventeenth day, Pulungu Konwar was put to death. After thirty one days Chakrapani Bar Barua was also executed. On twentieth Ahar, Chakrapani's brother was killed by his son.[211] 228

....There were six Phukans on the elephant. At that time, the people who were in Namdang Phukan's roster were distributed among the other five Phukans. Thereupon, there were only five Phukans in Guwahati. Hula Phukan refused to work with the Bar Phukan and he was sent back home. In his place, Lahan Rajneog was appointed as the Deka Phukan. The king entertained himself with various games and sports which he enjoyed in Kaliabar, renamed as Manpur. The king received the five Phukans with many gifts. Thereafter, the king returned to the capital at Garhgaon. 229

In saka 1606, the Bar Phukan imprisoned Namdangiya Phukan and sent him to the king. The king ordered Dulakahariya Bora, Saudang Bora and Da-Dhara Bora to stone the Namdang Phukan to death. In saka 1607, first of Jeth,[212] the king distributed fish among his people. The Bar Barua's brother displeased the king. In order to kill him, his brother, the Bar Barua, had to be removed from his office. On twenty first Jeth, four of his officers were

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210. The basic materials of the early Tai-Ahom buildings were wood and bamboo. The inter-exchanges with the 'Bengalis' affected in the introduction of masons and the north Indian style of architecture in the Tai-Ahom kingdom. The Garakhiya daul in Nazira is probably among the earliest masonry structures of the Tai-Ahoms. (For details on the Tai-Ahom architecture see Sharma, *Architecture*).
211. Here we have a note from the editor. "Forty two pages of the chronicle has been completed. The next four pages are missing. Probably the missing leaves contained information about the rebellion planned by the Phukans of Lower Assam. Swargadeo Gadadhar Singha sent an envoy called Haridhan to gather information about the rebellion. The king went to Kaliabar and subdued the rebellion. The Phukans were brought back to the capital and punished for their offence. The next passage begins from the forty seventh page", editor.
212. The fifteenth of May in the Gregorian Calendar.

stationed on the four doors of the palace. Saring Raja was stationed at the Sunpura door, the Dihingia Phukan was stationed at the Barduwar and Kathalbariya Dulakahariya Barua at the Meghaiduwar. Khamun's son, Saudang Bora was sent to the Bar Barua's house with the message that he was released from his office. He was asked to take a few men with him but not to arm them with any weapons. Saudang Bora was accompanied by Dulakahariya Bora and Da-dhara Bora. They took with them three hundred archers and the three Saikias.

The Saudang Bora sent a message to the Bar Barua to come out and accept the king's orders. On hearing this the Bar Barua became very afraid and sent a message to the Saudang Bora, 'If the king wants me to do something I should be given time to prepare myself. He should not get me by deception. If he lies that will not be in keeping with the tenets of religion.' The Saudang Bora replied, Don't be afraid. No harm will be fall you. If that should be I will also be the transgressor of religion.' The Bar Barua came out and asked what was it that their king desired him to do. He knelt down to receive the instructions. He was informed that the king has released him from his position and that he was given a few men to keep. All his property was to be confiscated. On hearing this the Bar Barua asked permission from the Saudang Bora to allow him to visit his home for the last time. He came back after some time and handed over to the Bora some silver and golden clothing. The other Boras also received four pieces of silver and some golden clothing.

The Barua then left for his new house in Dihing. He had traveled a little distance when the Saudang Bora approached him. The Barua was taken aback and asked the reason for this sudden visit. He said, 'The king desires that you should ride the black horse to your house in Dihing. You should mount the horse in my presence.' He gave him five rupees of silver. The Barua rode the horse as directed. 230

On thirteenth Jeth, Friday, Lahan Phukan was appointed as the Bar Barua. Pani Dihingia Rajkhowa, the former Barua's brother, was removed from office and in his place the Saudang Barua was appointed as a Rajkhowa. In place of Laukalikhuwa Paniphukan, Tingkhungiya Dulakahariya Barua was made the

Paniphukan. In saka 1607, on fourth Bhado, Saring Raja sent some presents of silver and golden clothes to the Bhaga-Barua and another to his brother, Bhaga-Paniphukan. He also sent a message which said, 'Please come to my aid. I want to be the king.' The Bhaga-Barua imprisoned Saring Raja's envoy, whom he sent to the Swargadeo with a message. 'I bow in front of my king. As you have placed me in this position, I remain your humble slave. Saring Raja has sent me this message. You have to determine what needs to be done.' However, he kept the nice presents and the golden dress sent by the Saring Raja which he donned and said, 'I will keep the nice presents and also worship the Deo'.[213] The king was happy with the Barua and realized that the Barua had a clean conscience. 231

The Paniphukhan was arrested and kept a prisoner in the elephant stable. The king said, 'Earlier anyone desiring to harm me was put to death, but now I am letting them live'. On third Ahin,[214] the king strangled him to death. In that same year, on eighth Bhado, the king ascended the house on the hill. On twenty first Kati, Bhaga Maring Barua was arrested and put to death on charges of past mischief and plotting against the king. In saka 1607, in Aghun, they went from Tiok to Disoi where he caught some elephants. In that year, a Basa was established in Toklai. In saka 1609, Kuwaugoyan Mau Bura Gohain was deputed with a number of men to construct a fort in Samdhara. In that very year, a group of Bebejiya[215] were settled in Toklai. In that year the celibate monks of the various Satras were retained, but the married ones were removed. In saka 1609, the king fell ill but recovered soon after. In 1612, the king went on a pilgrimage to Hala where he asked one hundred and eight brahmans to perform the worship of Vishwanath. Katyayan Bhattacharya was presented with food and gifts for one hundred brahmans. On ninth Bhado, the king returned to Garhgaon. In saka 1613, Dilihal Dighala Bhaga-Bar Gohain's house slave reported that Bhaga-Gohain in consultation with the Britiyal clan has adopted a prince. Earlier, the king had heard of this from a princess. On eighth Jeth, finding enough evidence to this effect Dighala Gohain was put to death. Also, the other members of his

213. In the Tai-Ahom tradition the king was an incarnate of God on earth.
214. The month covering the period from fifteenth September to fourteenth October.
215. A Bodo tribal group of the Koch kingdom.

family found guilty of harbouring the boy were put to death in the Bahghar. 232

On twentieth Aahin, brahmans, including Katyayan, who were residing in the Bahgarh were expelled and earthen pots were tied around their necks. After twenty days had passed the relatives of the Phukan were rounded up and put to death. On seventeenth Kati, a huge pit was dug up in the hills to build a temple there. After twenty five days the plinth was made of stones.[216] In that year, in Bhado, there were two floods in the kingdom. The area around the stairwell of the Hulung sunk deep into the ground and hence that spot came to be known as Haka-Hakini. In 1614, thirteenth Bhado, Sunday, the king went to the Lohit river where he organized a special puja by sacrificing saag ducks. The king prayed for his longevity of one hundred years. 233

After twenty three days had passed, the Namsangiya Nagas attacked our men and killed twenty three men. As a retaliatory measure, the king deputed Dihingia Phukan and his troops, to fight the Nagas of Namsang. Abhaypuria Chetia Bhaga-Barphukan was summoned from his house and asked to watch the Barduwar. Our men were able to subdue the Nagas and killed many of them. The Nagas surrendered and came to pay tribute to the king. Latha Khunbau was executed on the banks of the Jamuna. The others were sent back to their land with gifts and they were pardoned. 234

In 1615, a Bhakat was taken into custody.[217] The reason for this was at the time when the king was in hiding he stayed in the Dakhin Satra[218] where he met the Deka Gossain. The Gossain used

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216. It appears that a maidam for a royal grave was being constructed. Maidam was a royal ritual of burial and as long as the Tai-Ahom monarchy survived the tradition was maintained. It was adhered to long after Hinduism penetrated the Tai-Ahom society. The construction of maidams took a long time. The details of maidam construction are enumerated in the Changrun Phukan buranji. Gadadhar Singha's maidam is described at length in this chronicle. A major shift in the technique and style of maidam constructon took place in the reign of Rudra Singha. Above the burial ground a daul was constructed and thus maidams changed from a house for the dead to a sacred spot of burial for the god kings (P. Sharma, *Ahomor Bilupta Maidam Parampara*, Guwahati: Luit Press, 1993).
217. Vaishnav priests in Assam are referred to as Bhakat.
218. This Satra is in Majuli. Satra is the monastic institution of the Vaishnavas of Assam.

improper speech on that occasion which the king could not forget all this while. When Gadadhar was installed as the king by the Phukans at Kaliabar, the Deka Gossain tried to influence the Phukans to remove Gadadhar from the newly conferred position. The king had come to Bishwanath at that time. He saw a boat and inquired who was passing by. He learnt that it was the Dakhin Deka Gossain. The king said, 'Ask him to come here and bless me.' The Deka Gossain turned down the request. This was one reason. Another was Banmali Gossain made a golden statue. This the king kept in mind. The Bejdalia came and reported this to the king. He said, 'Why should a man of religion want to possess wealth. All he needs is plain sustenance. All his wealth is provided by his disciples. If you desire I can confiscate his wealth and bring it to you.' The king replied, 'I know all this. Very well Barua send your saudang and bring the priest to me.' On receiving permission the Bejadalia sent his bodyguard to capture the Bhakat and bring him to the king. They went and insulted the Mahajans and also confiscated their wealth. The golden idol of the Dakhin Satra was brought back, which they broke and buried in the daul in the Charaideo hills. As a punishment for his misdemeanor the priest of the Dakhin Satra, Ram Gossain, was blinded. The other priests were removed from their positions and banished to Namrup and also to Toklai. In Bhado, some of the banished priests were put to death in Namrup. 235

In saka 1616, during Bohag, the king went for a deer hunt to Bardubi where he also participated in other games and made merry. A deer came out of the mountains and died on the spot. The king contacted a flu and had to return. The fever did not subside. He had a big boil on his neck which caused great pain. That pain finally killed the king. He died in Phagun, after ruling for fifteen years and five months. 236

In Phagun, saka 1616, Rudra Singha ascended to the throne and for seven days there was rejoicing and celebration in the kingdom. In Kati, 1617 they dug a pond in Rangpur.[219] In 1619 it was ready for dedication. The priests of the kingdom were summoned and two more temples were constructed on the north

219. This is the famous Joisagar tank around which a huge temple complex was later constructed.

side of Rangpur. North of the reservoir, a complex for the king, Gossains, and the troops was also built and was named as Rangpur.[220] In 1620, the temples were completed and the image of a lion was installed in it.[221] 237

Lusayek Saring Raja and Sangtakar Kakhar Sungi Barua plotted a revolt against the king. At that time, the king was in Charideo. He had gone there to worship his ancestors.[222] They plotted to kill him after his return to the capital city from Charaideo. The king was informed of the plot by the Hanhsuwa[223] of the Saring Raja. The king sent his men to catch the two rebels. Saring Raja was banished to Namrup and his legs were broken, while Saring Barua was put to death. 238

In the meantime, the younger Gohain, Handique Bhitoruwal Phukan, Lanmukharu-Bhandar Naoboisa Phukan, Bailung Dekaphukan, Bhadoruwa Hiloidaree Saikham Hazarika, Ghorasuwa Lusan Bora - all of them plotted another rebellion against the king. This was reported to the king by Mesaghariya Damudar Phukan. The three Phukans, Hiloidari Hazarika and the others were put to death. Those who remained were removed from their positions. The younger Gohain was sent to Namrup. Some of his men were killed. The Gohain himself was blinded. 239

Bengali artisans were employed to construct the place at Rangpur. In Tengabari, the talatol ghar was also built by them.[224] A temple of Ranganath Gossaini was also constructed.[225] There the

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220. 'The City of Joy'.
221. At the entrance of the Daul Govinda temple also endowed by Rudra Singha a similar motif can be seen. The winged lion of the Tai-Ahom structures bears resemblance to the lion motif decoration of the Lao Buddhist temples. The same motif is seen on the coins of the Tripura kings.
222. The predominant element of the Tai-Ahom religion is recollection and worship of their forefathers. This aspect continues to survive to this day. The contemporary revamped ritual is called *dampata*.
223. The royal duck keeper.
224. This was an underground house which had a secret passage connecting the royal palaces of Rangpur and Garhgaon.
225. The present structure of the Ranganatha temple at Rangpur borrows heavily in style and structure from Bengal. The plan is octagonal, the roof is flat and adorned with a three tiered mastaka. This style was copied in the upper tier of the Talatal ghar of Rajeshwar Singha, Ghuguwa Dol in Lakhimpur and Bezor Dol in Sibsagar. Around the base of the dome, battlements in the Islamic style were also made. This is the only temple of the Tai-Ahom period which is so decorative (Sharma, *Architecture*, p. 111)

king donned the new royal robe. He also presented similar attires to his officials. The three Gohains - Maduriyal Laithapna Bar Gohain, Kuwaingoyan Darbadhar Bura Gohain and Kenduguriya Kanseng Bar Patra Gohain refused to wear the dress. They said, 'Why should we leave our own costume and put on the dress of the Bengalis?' But the Bura Gohain requested the king for his dress and wore the jama-ijar, like that of the king. In Namdang, a Silhaku was constructed by the Bengali artisans.[226] Thakuria priests[227] were asked to take initiation from the Brahman priests. 240

The Kachari king, Jai Singh, sent an envoy to our king asking him to give up the area he had occupied from them. The king was enraged when he heard this and demanded, 'How dare a petty chief, a Kachari, demand from the Swargadeo and moreover tell him what to do'. The Bar Gohain admonished the courtiers and asked them to chase the Kachari men away. The envoy was driven out of the palace, the letter was torn up and he was bodily attacked. The king and his ministers decided to send Kuwaigoyan Darbodhara Bura Gohain with his troops in the direction of Maring Nagasaki. Maringkhowa Bahbariya Barchetia Gohain was asked to confiscate the rice fields of the Kacharis.[228] Dihingia Alun Bar Barua's son and Deka Bar Barua, both of them were made commanders of the Rajkhowa. Saraighatiya Phulbarua Paniphukan was appointed as the commander of the other Phukans and Rajkhowas. He was ordered to lead his men in the direction of the Kapili river. In this way, our troops proceeded from two directions and reached

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226. The Silhaku or stone bridges were a pecularity of the Tai-Ahom architecture. The silhakus of the Shans of upper Burma are identical to that of the Tai-Ahoms. (For details, see Milne, *Shans*, p. 140).
227. The priests of the Vaishnava sect.
228. From this and other evidence it is clear that rice cultivation was practised in the Lauhitya valley much before the Tai-Ahoms settled there. This was reported to the Tai-Ahoms by the Barahi chief. The Kacharis had devised a way to build embankments to divert water into channals, thereby, creating areas where paddy cultivation was possible. Such a system allowed for more than subsistence level agriculture. The production of rice-beer was an established Kachari traditoin when the Tai-Ahoms occupied their riverain fields. In contrast to the Kacharis, the Morans and the Barahis were mostly gatherers and petty traders. No doubt, the Tai-Ahom settlement pattern further encouraged large scale deforestation and brought more land under the plough. A regular waterworks system was developed and even brahmans were encouraged with land grants to resettle in the Tai-Ahom kingdom.

Demaro Maibang.[229] The Kachari king fled to the Jaiantia kingdom. Our men demanded that the Kachari king should be handed to them. But the Jaiantia king refused. The Bar Barua fell ill in Maibang. The royalist troops attacked the Kacharis on their own without their commander. They looted the Kachari territory and collected a large amount of war booty. They brought it to the king at Bishwanath. The king appointed Bhitoruwal Phukan, Handique Bar Phukan's son, as the Barua of the new territory and returned to his capital. 241

After one year, once again, our men proceeded against the Kacharis. One group went in the direction of Misa.[230] They made their temporary residence there and proceeded to Kapili. These men were from Garhgaon. The Saraighatiya Bar Phukan proceeded in the direction of Gobha.[231] They all reached Jaiantiapur. The Jaiantia king, Ram Singh was defeated by the Bar Barua. The Kachari king was captured and sent back to our king. He was escorted by the Bhitoruwal Phukan. The Kachari king said, 'You should first catch the Jaiantia king and take him to the Swargadeo. If you do not do this the king will be taken by the Jaiantia Crown Prince. You will find it difficult to save yourself. They are enticing you to enter the town. Do not fall for his words.' Hearing this, the Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan conferred and agreed to take the Jaiantia king as their prisoner. The Jaiantia king lamented that 'He would die an unheroic death like a women.' The Baruas and Phukans agreed and decided to send the Jaintia king to their own king at Garhgaon.

The Crown Prince was also alerted at this time. He pursued the men who escorted the king to Garhgaon and killed a few, but could not free the king. A few men with Barkrishna Barthakur was sent to bring the Jaiantia goddess to our kingdom. When our men came to take the icon of the goddess, the Crown Prince accosted them and managed to retrieve the icon after killing a few men.

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229. The Kachari capital.
230. In the Nowgong district, east of the modern town of Nowgong.
231. Gobha lay between the Kalang river and the Garoo hills. Gobha was formerly an appendage to the government of Guwahati under the Bar Phukan. The region is interspersed with many small hills which were the channels of communication with Bengal through the Jaiantia kingdom (Wade, *Account of Assam*).

Krishna Thakur fled and took shelter in a tree. He was brought down and killed. In the meanwhile, the two Phukans escorted their royal prisoner, the Jaiantia king, and managed to reach Gobha. The Jaiantia raja was handed to the Dihingiya Phukan while they returned to occupy the territory of the Jaiantia kingdom. The Bura Gohain was earlier asked to divide his men who were in charge of carrying rice. He came out at this time. The king asked the Bura Gohain to bring the Crown Prince to him. But they could not find the Prince and this was reported to the king. The king asked his men to come out of their dwelligns and they all did so. 242

Our king returned to Rangpur and there he entertained the Kachari and Jaiantia king. They both accepted the Swargadeo as their overlord. The Jaiantia king died in our capital. The king cremated his body according to the Jaiantia norms. Two years later the king visited the Jaiantia kingdom and there he installed the eldest prince as the king. He promised to pay annual tribute to the Swargadeos. And the other Baruas and Phukans were asked to find out the younger Prince and bring him to the king. However, they could not find him. 243

One night, a miscreant broke down two doors leading to the Bahgarh. The same night, the shikaras of the temple at Tingkhang and that at Charaideo were broken. The king went to Barnadi where he gave a large amount in alms to the Gassains and then returned to Rangpur. 244

The king decided to deal with the kingdom of Bengal. Therefore, he proceeded to Saraighat. There he made his temporary residence in a fort in Parikshit's kingdom. One day, a low caste man came towards the king's main chamber. Some people saw him and asked who he was. The commotion woke the king who came out with his dagger and asked Ghanshyam Bora to find out what was the matter. He went to the crowd outside and asked, 'What is the matter here? What have you seen?' They replied, 'We saw a man go this way. Hence the commotion.' It had rained earlier. Now they saw that there were wide footprints on the ground. An inquiry was made to ascertain who had come that way. All of them replied that they had not. The king ordered that the foot prints of the assembled men should be examined and anyone having wide toes wil be taken in as his prisoner. The man was finally found and later in the

morning this man hacked to death. Other men of the same caste were either maimed or blinded and were confined to their homes. 245

One day, when the king went for a deer hunt to Drigheswari,[232] a wild buffalo attacked the royal entourage. One man was killed and the bull charged into the Gohains dulas. One of the deer hunters tried to kill the buffalo with a spear. The king took shelter for a while and then proceeded to hunt in the forest. In the phanuchang[233] some monkeys came and attacked them. They could not be chased away. The king ordered that they should be killed. The hunting expedition was a disaster and hence the king returned after leaving instructions that the wounded elephants should be first taken care of before the rest of the men returned. 246

The king called upon three men - Laithapna Gohain's son, the Bar Gohain, Kuwaigoyan Phukan Bura Gohain and Kenduguriya Deka Bar Patra Gohain to consult with them about a possible attack on the kingdom of Dacca. Kenduguriya Barpatra Gohain said, 'This has been well thought by the king. The region around the Karatoya belongs to us. Since we have become negligent of it our enemies have occupied it. A king should be able to defeat his enemies and take possesion of his own domain. Many men have now become independent and have their own fleets. If the king desires, we will do away with all of them.' Kuwaigoyan Phukan-Bura Gohain said, 'The Swargadeo and the Bar Patra Gohain are right. Our kings in former times had fought many bloody wars and occupied the territory around Rangamati and the Karatoya. Guwahati was the military outpost and the Manas river was fixed as the boundary. A lot was achieved in the reign of Jayadhvaj Singha, yet he was nicknamed as Bhaganiya Raja. We have all necessary war implements for battle. We should test our own military might and also that of the enemies. There is both victory and defeat in battle. But we should still think of what is better in these circumstances. However, we will do as the king desires.' The king was angry with the replies given by the Gohains and sent them away. The Baruas and Phukans came to the king and assured that they will do as the

232. In north Guwahati.
233. A stilt house made for watching deer.

king order them and will proceed to kill the Daccans and extend the boundary of our kingdom. 247

The king ordered that the ditches on either side of the road from the capital to the Lohit river should be cleaned. The king built a house for the benefit of the people. They visited this house and they all blessed the king for his thought. But the king fell ill and had to return to his palace . From that day his health deteriorated. In order to extend his palace the king had asked that the area around the palace should be dug up. Later, he dreamt that this was a sanctified spot and he had invaded that territory. Hence the cause of his sickness. Immediately it was ordered that the spot was to be restored and trees were planted and alms were given generously. But the king did not recover. After eight days, Swargadeo Rudra Singha died. The year was saka 1633 (1636)[234] and it was the month of Bhado. He had ruled for eleven years and six months. 248

In that year, the senior most Gohain was installed in the Hulung and all the officers came to pay their respect to him. That night everyone kept watch. The Bhitoruwal Phukan kept watch on the main door of the chamber. And Miri-Handique Dihingiya Phukan kept a close watch from the other door. 249

It was agreed that the king should come to the capital. But one of the three dancing girls of the king took ill and so it was delayed for four days. The deceased king was put on a boat and Ghanshyam Pasani Bora was despatched to kill the three dancing girls who were buried there. 250

The Kuwaigoyan Phukan-Bura Gohain and his older son, Barchetia Gohain, were sent with their men to upper Assam. The king imprisoned the Bar Phukan and brought him to Rangpur. The body of the king was buried in Sunapur. There the Phukan-Bura Gohain died in October. In Kati, the king ordered that the new burial mound should be made. In Kati, once again, the body was buried with due respect. A big feast was given to the mahajans. In Phagun, the new king ascended to the throne. He took the name of Siva Singha. For seven days there was celebration and the three ministers were rewarded with presents and gifts. In Bohag, a tree was planted by the king. 251

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234. Both these dates are provided in the text.

The Lautokiya Koch's daughter was the wet-nurse of the king. This nurse was also put up in the palace. Sinatoliya Nata's daughter, Phulmati, was the royal dancer. She was made the chief queen and named Barraja. She was given a royal umbrella and also an elephant. Her brother was appointed as the Bar Patra. One uncle was appointed as the Tipamiya Phukan and another as the Dhekiya Barua. The tradition of burial was revoked and the dead kings were cremated. The Thakuria Mahajans were asked to kneel in front of the temple and Srimurti Bhagawat Halgram Beori Bhagawati was asked to perform the worship. Many other ancient traditions were broken. All the icons of the palace were taken out and thrown into the Lohit river. They were replaced with new icons of stones and brass. This was another mistake. In Namdang, a reservoir was constructed wherein a temple was built and named as Gaurisagar. 252

Her younger sister was married to the Miri Handique Halal Bar Gohain. She had two sons. The king brought her back and made her the Parbatiya princess. Another son was born who was made the Tipam Raja. The two sons from her former marriage were made the Bar Gohain and another the Sadiyakhuwa Gohain. Near the village of Kalyunpuria Gossain a reservoir was built and a temple was constructed and the place was named Sibsagar. Thereafter, the king went on a fishing and hunting expedition and made merry. There the Parbatiya princess died. Her body was brought to Chariadeo and a burial mound was prepared. On the spot where she died a temple was built in her honour. 253

In that year, in Kati, Railungiya Bura Gohain died. When Siva Singh went to Charaideo to perform Khunmung,[235] Maut-Gohain was presented in the king's chamber. The king put his foot on the man's head and said, 'I appoint you as Gossain. May you live forever.' So saying he gave him a handful of betelnuts and also two pair of dresses, one of which he asked him to wear before he went home. The king asked the Majumdar to tell the Gossain that he had been given this honor because of the good adivce that he gave to the king on earlier occasions. If he continued to do so the king would reward him with land and all its revenue in perpeuity to his sons and grandsons. The Gossain replied, 'I have done as I know. The

235. Also known as *Damapata*.

knowledge is not mine but given by God. And in future too I will continue to give good service to the king. It all has to come from God.' His son was appointed as the Lari Gohain and was given two horses, riding which both father and son returned home. 254

The daughter of Bhagajana Halal Bar Gohain, Aakori Gobhoru, was earlier married to Kalugayon Bar Patra. She was now taken in by the king and made the chief queen. This happened in saka 1661. 255

In saka 1665, a comet appeared in the sky. It was visible in the sky for three months - Puh, Magh, and Phagun. In saka 1666, when ten days of kati had passed the king died. 256

The Saring Raja, Batghariya Gohain, Bhubula Gohain, and Kalhila Gohain - all these four brothers were beside the king. His son, Tipam Raja, bathed the body of the king and held on to the big toe of the deceased king. Pukhuripariya Bura Gohain, Kalugoyan Bar Patra Gohain, Madhuriyal Halal Mau and his brother-Biray Na-Phukan, his uncle Kathahuda Phukan, Bakathiyal Rupchandra Bar Barua, Lanmukrar Bhitaruwal Phukan, Duara Barphukan's son Abahaypuria Phukan, some Samuwa Barua, all of them were beside the king. The Miri-Handique Dihingiya Phukan was guarding the middle doorway to the king's chamber. The Hatibarua Deka Phukan was in the uppper part of the chamber. Bakathiyal Rajneog was in the middle chamber.

At this time, Kalugoyan Bar Patra Gohain, Dihingiya Bar Gohain, Dihingiya Naobaisa Phukan - these three men decided to install the Tipam Raja as the king. When the king died, the Tipam Raja left the side of the king's feet and made preparation to contest for the throne. Pukhuripariya Bura Gohain and Bakathiyal Bar Barua told the Tipam Raja, 'The king's brother is our Raja. Who else but you should be the king? When the three ministers decided you should be the king the final decision for the successor was made. Servants cannot determine who should be king.' The Bura Gohain called the Saring Raja and said, 'What are you looking at? Catch the Tipam Raja.' Hence he caught his hand. The Saring Raja had a dagger in his hand. The dagger scratched the Tipam Raja. In this way, the four brothers escorted the Tipam Raja out from the chamber but was hindered by the Bhitoruwalmukhiya. The Bura Gohain told the Bar Barua, 'What are you looking at, kill him.' In

the meantime, a changmai brought a dagger to the Tipam Raja. They all came to the house. This they took and occupied themselves. 257

They later reached Dulakahariya. The Bura Gohain and the Bar Baruas now said, 'Saring Raja, we make you our king.' The Bura Gohain held him by his hand and escorted him to the platform and declared, 'The king's brother has become our new king. Everyone should pay respect to him.' Everyone did so. The Bura Gohain then told the new king, 'We bestow on you the mighty throne. Be kind to the good and punish the wicked. Provide law and justice to all men and beasts. That is your religion. You have three more brothers, they should be considered like your sons. They should also respect you like their father. Do not desert the Tipam Raja. Be kind to your children.' So saying, the Bura Gohain went to the upper platform to bathe the body of the deceased king and prepare for his funeral. After twenty days, Swargadeo Siva Singha was taken to the hills in Charaideo and buried there. 258

In order to arrest the new uprisings in the kingdom, the Kalugoyan Bar Patra was removed and in his place Kenduguriya Bar Partra's son was appointed as the new Bar Patra. The Dihingiya Bar Gohain was removed and replaced by Laithapna Bar Gohain's son, Khamsang Gohain, as the Bar Gohain. The Dhekiyal Barua, his son Larigohain, Tipamiya Phukan, and their Naga slaves were all imprisoned in the elephant stables. In Phagun, all rites of installation of the new king were performed. All the mahajans of the kingdom were invited and a Vishnu Puja was performed. The former rebels were taken to court and those found slightly guilty were removed from their position and sent back home. The Tipamiya Phukan, Dhekiyal Barua, and his son, Naga, and a few others were maimed. 259

In 1667, one early morning the king entered the Singori ghar.[236] In the afternoon the three ministers came to pay respect to him. The king called for his elephant and went to fetch the icon of Seng. He went to the changghar and fetched the icon. He wore it around his neck and sat in the Singorighar. Three lion platforms were made. On each of them there was a special cloth. On the right was Bura Gohain, the Bar Gohain held the platform on the west

236. The cornation hall. No traces of this structure exist today.

and the Bar Patra on the south side. The king ascended the lion motif throne on the south side, facing the east. The royal bugles were sounded and the bailung also blessed the cermony.

The three ministers of the king, the Bar Barua, Ahom Bhandar Barua and the three Bailungs were the only ones present. As he descended from the platform he put his hand on the Bura Gohain's head. While the Deodhais made necessary preparations, the king sat on another seat called Narapira. There Bhandar Barua showed the stores of betelnut, betel-leaves, rice, vegetables and clothes to the king. The three ministers and the Baruas and Phukans who were present bowed nine times in front of the king. They all left. Everybody feasted in the hulung. Later in the day, the king sat on the nine-layered lion platform. There the ministers and officers bowed seven times before the king.

The king came down from the throne and stood on the Narapira where he killed a white bull. Seven days were spent in royal merriment. On the eighth day, the image of Seng was taken back to the Deoghar and installed there once again. The king returned on his royal dula. The ministers were all assigned their respective seats in the chamber. The king asked that the ambassadors of the Jaiantia and the Kachari kings should be presented before him. The three ministers were consulted. The Bar Gohain and Bar Patra agreed that they should be brought to the court. The Bura Gohain said, 'The two kingdoms, the Jaiantia and the Kacharis were taken by your ancestors. Your father having found that they had disobeyed him had sent his men to occyupy both the territories and their kings were brought here. The arrangements that were made were respected by the Kacharis, but the Jaiantias did not. On this account he was imprisoned for fourteen years. Hence, we should bring the Kachari ambassador to this royal celebration but not the Jaiantia envoy. If we do not do so, the fourteen years of punishment will be of little meaning.' Inspite of this advice the king invited them to the royal celebration.

After five days, the three ministers, once again, went to pay respect to the king. The Bar Gohain's daughter, who was the Chief queen, sat in the middle of the gathering. Each of them were given thirty pieces of cloth, five pieces of gold, twenty four pieces of silver,

two pots, one buffalo, a pair of milking cows, the pigs, one pair of ducks, and two pair of hens. In Phagun, the king planted a tree. 260

In saka 1667, during the month of Phagun, the Bura Gohain received the envoy of the Raniraja.[237] Bidyanibas Kotoki was deputed to represent the royal court. The Bura Gohain asked Bidyanibas to make the customary inquiries concerning the health and well being of the people of the foothills of Rani. Also how long has the envoy been travelling and how was his journey. The envoy replied that everything was well when he had left the domain of the Raniraja and it took him five pakhya to travel here.[238] The Gohain replied, 'Our Swargadeo agrees that his subject people of Rani should live in peace and happiness'. The envoy said, 'The Garos, and Mikirs live near us in the mountains. Also there are many forests and wild beasts in the mountains. Our king had given you the cow bone, which he wants you to return. We have also lost much of our strength. Hence I have been sent here. Can you advise how I can get audience with the Swargadeo?' The Gohain told Bidyanibas, 'In the past when Ramchandra[239] prayed his wishes they were fulfilled'. The Garo and Mikir are of the same group as the people of Rani. The Swargamaharaja is Ramchandra.... (The buranji ends here. The remaining folios are missing, editor.) 261

237. The Ranigaon or the country of the Rani Raja extended along the Garo foothills as far as the Bagoribaree Chokey and along the foot of the mountains to Phukoonur Ali causeway, which separated Ranigaon from Beltola. (For details, see Wade, *Account of Assam*).
238. One pakhya is equivalent to fifteen days. Thus, five pakhyas is about two and a half months.
239. Refers to the Hindu god Rama.

Chronicle IV

From the time of the Dihingia Raja to Swargadeo Gaurinath Singha

Dihingia Raja ascended to the throne in the saka year which corresponded to lakli Tamou.[240] His Ahom name was Suhummung. Two years after his ascension he fought against the Chutias. After defeating them and killing their king, he amassed their royal articles. He removed Phulung Khampeng Bura Gohain from the office of chief minister, and in his place appointed Phrasengmung as his chief minster. This was in reward for his good service in the battle. This Phrasengmung Gohain obtained the royal chair of the Chutias to which he added a tall back rest and a platform. A mattress of red, yellow and black colour was placed on the chair and presented to the king. After twelve years, the Aitoniya Nagas were defeated and many were killed. After two years, they fought the Devargaon Marangi and the Kacharis. After two years, they fought and defeated the Bara-Bhuyans of Uttar Kul. A year later they built a fort. Next year they destroyed the plant bata temani.[241] After three years, they fought with Turbak. In that year, Garhaonyan Raja who was the Crown Prince and Devaraja fought against Turbak as ordered by the king. In that war, Phrasengmung Bar Gohain and his wife Gobhoru were killed.

The next Bar Gohain, Thaomungkilingkham, also died while fighting against Turbak. Also Saisunglung Rungring died in that battle. In that year twenty golden hengdans were lost. But Kangseng Bar Patra Gohain was able to break into the line of the Bengali army and kill many of their men. He captured eight hundred horses and five elephants. After losing the battle they presented a woman to our king. As a reward for his excellent service in the war against the Bengalis, the king appointed Kangseng as his chief minister.

240. This lakli is not recorded in the Tai-Ahom calendar. Probably it is Dapmao which is the fifty second lakli of an era.
241. Temena is a plant used for making intoxicants.

Vishwa Singh made overtures of friendship to the enemy and thus captured them. Later, we made an alliance with the Badshah of Gaur, built a temple on the Karatoya and made an agreement to establish the boundary along the Manas river. Along with the princess, two elephants, fifteen horses, a number of slaves and gold articles were given in dowry. In this way, after the arrangements were made in consultation with the Barua, the Garhgaonyan Raja came to our country. This battle started in Aghun and ended in Bhado. Tension broke out between the father, Dihingia Raja and his son, the Garhgaonyan Raja. Both of them wanted the Bengali princess. The officers who had fought in the war sided with the Garhgaonyan Raja. The place where father and son fought came to be called Jathiputa.... (After Dihingia Raja, Garhgaonyan Raja became king and he was succeeded by Khura raja. But there is no mention about them in the puthi, editor.) 262

His son, Pratap Singha became the king and was nicknamed Burha Raja or the old king. Soon after he became king, he killed many Sayaniya Nagas. The archers were given twenty pieces of silver, cowri and clothes. Khels were constituted and Phukan, Rajkhowa, Samuwa, Melbhogiya Phukans were appointed. The Miris and Mishimis were also defeated. All the others who managed to escape punishment were forced to pay a tax to the king. This was of great service to the king. The leader of the Abors was captured and brought to the king. All other peoples became greatly afraid of our king. At this time, Tankham Bar Gohain was in Mara, while, Khampat Bar Gohain was the chief minister. This Gohain fell in battle, hence, there was no chief minister for sometime. Later, Thakbak Bura Gohain was appointed as the chief minister. In the reign of Burha Raja an octagonal gold coin bearing a Hindu inscription was minted. Mangal, the Dimoruwa king, was defeated.[242] After three years, the king fought against the Kacharis. In that battle, both the Bar Gohain and Sundar Gohain were killed. Sundar Gohain had heard some rumours about the Swargadeo and did not pay much attention to his task of fighting the Kacharis. Hence the Kacharis were able to kill him. After five years, a fort was built in Saina. Elephants which were taken captive were trained for two years. Each of the three ministers was given two elephants. To

242. A small, independent kingdom near Gobha.

the four Gonak families, one female elephant was given to each household. After two years our men fought the Bengali army on the banks of the Bharali river. They were defeated and our men captured a lot of their war articles.

In the reign of this king, the Bura Gohain renovated the crooked dula which was straightened and a seat was installed in each and these were presented to the Phukans. After a year had elapsed since the battle with the Bengalis, he ordered for the construction of a fort in Samdhara. After one year, Thakbak Bura Gohain was sent to fight the Bengalis in Hajo and he died in the battle. Our army returned to the fort in Samdhara. In that battle, Nawab Mudi and Sheikh Farid were taken captive. After a year, another fort was built in Tuloshi. A year later special worship was performed in the Lohit river. In the next year a number of ganaks and brahmans were given charity. After a year, a fort was built in Bahgarh. For his service Hukoti Tamuli Tipamiya Rajkhowa was appointed as the Bar Barua. And Langi Panihiya was made the Bar Phukan in recognition of his leadership qualities displayed in the battle against the Bengalis and managing to bring back our soldiers who had fled the battlefield. In the reign of this king, in saka 1562, Bharali Chetia settled seven gaons and gifted them to the brahmans and gonaks for their maintenance. In his reign, many new posts were created - Hoimela Mulan Bar Gohain (1), the Moran's Bar Patra (1) and Thakbak was made chief minister. On the death of Mumai Tamuli, a clansman of the Bura Gohain, Hatipuwali was appointed as the Bar Barua. On receiving a complaint against the Bhandari Chetia from the Bar Gohain, he was put to death and in his place Raumariya Ganak was made the head of the big bhandar. He also had to settle the tax returns with the gold traders. A fort was constructed in Rajlung. After two years, to atone himself for the crime of assassinating Misi's father, the king performed a yajna and brahmans and gonaks were presented with enormous gifts. A reservoir was made in Mesaghar.[243] In that year, the senior most minister died. After a year, envoys were sent to neighboring countries and all of them recognized the might of our king. Meanwhile, the king had fallen ill. He ruled for thirty nine years. He died on tenth Bhado. 263

243. Near Rangpur.

His son was Bhoga Raja. After he ascended to the throne he ordered for the construction of a road to Salguri. Hatipuwali's son, Luhok was appointed as the Bar Barua. But because of his bad deeds he was removed from his position by the three ministers. He ruled for one year. 264

The Bhaganiya Raja's brother, Nariya Raja, became the new king and after three years he killed Sungi. Laku Bar Patra's son, Lahuk, who was the Bar Barua was executed and Sorubura was appointed as the chief minster. Tungsu Handique was appointed as the Bar Barua. Bansang Tama was appointed as the Bar Patra. A year later, the son killed his father and ascended to the throne. In his reign, the covering on the royal aruwan was changed to white. He ruled for four years. 265

When his son, Bhaganiya Raja ascended to the throne he executed Soriah Bura Gohain. A fort was constructed at Sahiyat. Another fort was built at Machkhowa. After five years, a reservoir was built on the banks of the Lohit river and a road was also constructed. The tradition of writing in copper plates was instituted in his reign. After six years, he defeated the Dhekeri Raja.[244] Sorubura Bar Gohain was put to death and in his place Langisang was appointed as a Gohain. His father-in-law was appointed as the chief minister. After one year he fled from the kingdom. At that time Nawab Mir Jumla came to Assam. The king's daughter, the three sons of the three Gohains and also the king's father-in-law's son were sent as hostage to the Bengal court. Along with the princess a large amount of gold and silver amounting to two hundred thousand taka and many slaves were gifted. This princess was made the chief queen of the Badshah.[245] The Bengali army returned from our kingdom after receiving all these presents. In reward for his services the gonak, Maur Pasani, was appointed as the Majumdar Barua. On route to Bengal, the Bura Gohain's nephew, Ramrai Gohain, was killed, so too, Barukiyal Bar Gohain's son, Thala Gohain, and the son of the Bar Patra of Kenduguri. But the king's father-in-law's son, Mowpiya, survived. He ruled for fifteen years. 266

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244. The Tai-Ahoms referred to the king of Darrang as the Dhekeri Raja and his subjects as Dhekeri.
245. According to other buranjis, the Tai-Ahom princess was gifted to Aurangzeb's son Azamtara.

Chakradhvaj Singha ascended to the throne. He was from Saring. After becoming the king, he executed the father-in-law of the former king and in his place appointed Bahghariya Bura Gohain as his chief minister. After one year he fought against the Bengalis. In that war our men captured Syed Sena and Syed Piruj. A road was built connecting Teliyadanga with Jajimukh. They dug a pond along the way. The Bahgarhiya Bura Gohain made fresh provisions for supplying water by digging a pond in the fort at Saraighat. In Kaliabar, a Rangali ghar was constructed.[246] A year later, Lachit Bar Phukan, Mumai Tamuli's son, constructed the fort. Our men fought against the Muslim army led by Ram Singh. The king took ill and died after ruling for seven years. 267

His brother, who was next in the line of succession became the king. His name was Jayadhvaj Singha. After he ascended to the throne our men fought against Ram Singh and won the battle. They also fought against the Daflas. In that battle, Ghurakonwar Bar Barua was made the commander of a huge army. But due to the wretchedness of the Bar Barua our forces could not gain victory against the Daflas. In that battle, Khaga Hazarika, Khundagum Hazarika and Lesai Hazarika were killed. The road from Mesaghar was straightened. A door bearing a lion symbol was built for the Bahgarh. In his reign, a Dhekeri Bairagi came to our kingdom who was a black magician and therefore could foretell about strange things and incidents. The king donated an orchard outside the palace to the Bairagi. He also became his disciple. He gave permission to the Bairagi to initiate the sons of the mahajans and also the Ahom youth. When he commanded that mahajan Gajala Aadhikar should also be initiated by this Bairagi, Debera and the two Hazarikas of Ratanpur and Dakhinpatiya objected. He ruled for three and a half asaris. 268

He was killed by his younger brother, who ruled for a year and a half. It was rumoured that Debera's nephew, Sengmung Debera, and the Tipamiya Gohain wanted to nominate Barukiyal Bar Gohain as the new king. The Bar Gohain was put to death and Sengpung became the Bar Gohain. The king was ill at that time. Debera took advantage of the situation and executed Tangsu Handique's father and son. The father of Norakonwar Dulia Barua

246. A stadium.

and his son were also killed. Ghurakonwar Bar Barua's brothers were also put to death. Hula Phukan's son, Lau, was also killed. Many other Boras and Baruas were killed. When the king retired to sleep the main door of the king's chamber was locked by Pasasimalu Gohain. The king had to break open the door with his elephants. The Gohain was put to death for the offence of barricading the door. The tradition of sounding the kettledrums every time the king went in or came out of the fort/palace became prevalent. He ruled for a year and half. 269

A prince from Samuguri was installed as the king by Debera and his men. He was king for twenty days. Mumai Tamuli's daughter, Bhaganiya, was one of the king's wives. She was now made the chief queen. She said, 'Debera will get us too.' It was decided that Debera should be captured. They discussed this in the Bailung language with the Naobaisa Phukan.[247] The thaihara[248] overheard it and reported this to Debera. He killed the prince of Samuguri and buried the princess with the king in the maidam at Samuguri. He had ruled for twenty days. 270

A prince of the Tungkhungiya village was installed as the new king and the widowed sister of Sikan Gohain was made the chief princess. On hearing this, the Bura Gohain at Saraighat said, 'Debera should spare us. He has killed all his opponents, he will also kill us. We should make him king.' The other ministers rejected this proposal saying, 'How can a sudra weave the holy thread for the brahman? In that case we should rather accept Namrupiya Gohain's son, Arjun Gohain, as our king.' They captured Debera and starved him to death. Gobar Konwar was also captured and taken to the hills. He ruled for a month and a half. 272

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247. The early British administrators differentiated between the written language of Assam which they called *Bailungia* and the spoken dialect called *Bhasa*. Hamilton writes, 'they possess some books called Bulongji, written in a character which appears on the old coins, and which seems to have a strong affinity with that of Ava.' Again he writes, 'The Bangalese language also became more common language even in the court; the original Assamese, in all probablity will soon be lost; and it is now a dead language, and is only studied by those who follow the old worship.' (Hamilton, *Account of Assam*, pp. 5-7; Wade, *Account of Assam*, pp. i-ii).
248. The sweeper.

After him, Soru Dihingia became the king. After one year there was rebellion in the kingdom. Some birds had built a rather large nest and the two sons of Tipam Saring Gohain were sent to exterminate it. They were stopped on their way by the Bura Gohain who refused to let them pass. This was reported to the king by Khatuyal Chetia, who then inquired from the Gohain the reason for such an action. He said, 'I have been directed to kill you both.' They pleaded for their lives. The king replied, 'This is a lie, I haven't asked the Gohain to kill you. Rather I have asked him to teach you a lesson.' But they were not convinced. Betmela Phukan, Kalasu Phukan, Tepartaliya Phukan and his brother, Naobaisa Phukan, consulted among themselves and decided to imprison the king. They entered the town. The king killed many of their men with his sword. Riding a black horse the minister went to the Bahghar. The king sent for the Maramara mahanta, Katanipara Mahanta, and Katyayan Bhattacharjya. They refused to come.

He sent his son-in-law, the Bar Patra Gohain, and Huimela Bar Gohain, Laithepena Halal Gohain to the other officers saying that 'They should not be afraid. I saw the minister ride the black horse, but I did not stop him. Don't be afraid, you will not be hurt even by the measure of a chicken's feather.' The officers replied, 'When a good woman turns to bad ways will her children approve of it?' Halal Gohain was sent to Kaliabar. The Bar Gohain and the Bar Patra Gohain stayed with the king. The Bar Patra Gohain said, 'I am your son. In any case, whether I am here or I go away I am always with you. Please let me go to Saraighat. Once a boat sinks it will continue to sink. Let me go and stay in Saraighat.' So saying, he left for Guwahati. The other ministers proceeded to Devargaon and from there sent word to Hulaphukan. 'Don't desert me Phukan, come to upper Assam.' Hearing this, the Bar Phukan joined the Bura Gohain. When the king heard this he consulted with Kirkiriya Bar Barua and asked him to give fight to them in Cinatali. When many men were killed, the king said, 'The Bura Gohain has not come to kill the king. He has come to kill me. You do not have to kill the king, stop fighting.' Thus the fight came to an end. Riding a black horse and wearing the Ratnavali, the king came to Garhgaon. Sorugohain also accompanied him. The other Gohains had stopped fighting and now proceeded to Bokata. The Bura Gohain sent Kalasu Phukan and Bhardhara Phukan to the inner chamber of the

palace where they pulled out the tongues of the two princesses who were the daughters of Kekura Handique. Sorugohain was put down from the king's lap, the Ratnavali was taken off from his neck and his eyes were plucked out. The king killed himself with a stone. Then the Gohains caught the two princesses and put them to death after a great deal of torture. The king had ruled for one year. 272

After him, the Parbatiya konwar became the king. In his reign, a stone bridge over Dijay was constructed. Since the Bura Gohain was instrumental in making him the king, he was rewarded with a gold bata,[249] gold cups, bowls, an estate in the hills, elephants and horses, slaves and servants and also a dula for his wife. The minister was honoured but he returned these gifts except the land and the personal slaves and servants. In Kati Bihu the minsters paid respect to the two wives of the king. When the minister tried to bow before the chief queen, she ran away saying, 'How can I accept my father bowing before me?' All of them therefore returned. This was reported to the king. The king asked, 'Why did the daughter of the rebel leader run away?' The queen sent a message to the minister, 'Very well you reported me to the king. Now I am being ridiculed as the daughter of the rebel leader.' The minister replied, 'This is due to my bad fate.' Next time when he went to pay his respects to the queen, she placed the Ratnavali in front of her. The three ministers bowed before her and left.

The ministers used to visit the Phukan's house where they took their meals. But Mesa Bar Barua refused to eat there. The Phukan complained, 'Since his daughter, the Parbatiya princess is the beloved of the king, he does not come to my house.' But the other officers, Kalasu Phukan Govinda, Tepartaliya Phukan Ram, Dilihal Bhitaruwal Phukan Betmela said, 'Mesa abhors the horse stable.' It was reported to the king through the Mau Majumdar that, 'Mesa Barua looks down on our gurughar,[250] while he lives with the younger daughter of the Saring Raja, the daughter of your younger brother and the daughter of the Deodhai. He should be removed from his position of the Bar Barua.' Thus Mesa was removed and Halguri Rajkhowa Chakrapani was appointed as the Bar Barua. Mesa was exiled to Laphabari. His daughter, the Parbatiya princess,

249. An Assamese tray.
250. The abode of the religious preceptor.

who was the beloved of the king kept nagging him on this account. The Raja was enraged at the minister. Kalasi Phukan Govinda, Tepartaliya Phukan and Bhitoruwal Phukan Betmela learnt of this and they decided, 'When the Sorudihingia Raja wanted his son to kill us, we removed him from the throne. The Parbatiya king is deceptive, too. We should remove him to safeguard our lives.' The three Phukans conferred and hired the tamulkata[251] of Kalasu Dekaphukan. He attacked the king while he was asleep, but could not kill him. The king lost a finger. When it was inquired by the Bura Gohain, Kalasu Phukan said, 'I have heard that Mesa Bar Barua had sent Jadu Tamuli to his daughter and he did this.' But the princess had already learnt of this and so she sent a message to her father. When Jadu Tamuli was questioned he denied doing so. He was hacked to death. The Duari Barua was convicted of opening the door for Jadu Tamuli in the night and was also put to death, so too, Jadu Hazarika and some ten or twelve other men.

At this time, the envoys from the Jaiantia and the Kachari kingdoms came to our court. Mau Majumdar had invited them. The Badshah's son, Azamtara, was in Dacca and Manjur Khan was the Nawab. Hula sent his men to their court and without giving battle surrendered Guwahati to them. When he returned, his uncle Baduli Phukan cursed him saying, 'You are the son of a Bar Barua, yet you surrendered without fighting. I had told the Badshah earlier, "my nephew is a very covrageous soldier". I am ashamed that I praised you at all.' When Baduli Phukan said so, Hula left Saraighat and came to upper Assam. But the Bura Gohain said, 'Without the knowledge of the king, the Bar Phukan surrendered Guwahati to the enemy. This is a terrible action. They should build a fort somewhere mid-way and strengthen their position.' This task was entrusted to Chakrapani Bar Barua. Kaupatiya Barhbandar Barua said, 'If the others have wicked thoughts in their mind, so do we.' The Bura Gohain and the Bar Barua crossed the Jaji river and helped in building the fort. At times the king came to inspect the work. When Hula learnt about the construction of a fort, he lied

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251. The royal betel-nut cutter. Betel-nut was an important element of the court paraphenalia. The chief hobles of the capital had their personal betel-nut carriers and cutters and were never seen without the bearer. In the Thai court too, significant emphasis was laid on this aspect of royal style. (See Esterik, 'Royal Style', p. 109).

that he was having a dialogue with the Bengalis. He also sent word to the king that the Bengalis were approaching Saraighat.

Bahghariya Bura Gohain was made the commander. He was accompanied by Betmela Phukan, Tepartaliya Phukan, Mau Gohain-Phukan and many more men. In the meantime, Hula surrendered Saraighat and retreated with his men. The Bar Phukan sent word to the Bura Gohain. 'Please stay there. Please send me the armaments and the soldiers of the Phukans.' The minister took an oath from Kalasu Phukan, Tepartaliya Phukan and Betmela Phukan and sent them to Hula. When they reached the place where Hula was staying, he took the three Phukans inside and imprisoned them and also the men who had accompanied them. Kalasu Phukan lamented, 'We will die an ignominious death, like a woman. We could not behead Hula.' Hula captured the Bura Gohain's father and son, so also Tepartaliya's father and son, Betmela and the Bura Gohain's brother, Naobaisa Phukan's father and son and put them to death.

When the Bura Gohain died, Dighala Phukan was appointed as the Bura Gohain and he was also given one thosuand men. After returning to the capital he inquired about the attack on the king. Finding that it was Kalasu Phukan's tamulkata, he hacked him to death and put twenty men on the s333take and seized the king. Kirkiriya Bhaga Bar Barua was appointed as the Deka Phukan of Guwahati and was placed in the fort in Samdhara.

Hula prevailed in his territory. He did not care for the instructions sent by the king. The king heard that he criticised him by saying, 'Whether the king's finger has been cut by a low caste or an untouchable it is hard to say. He is hardly a king, I am keeping him in his position.' The king summoned Handique Duliya Barua and gave him some expensive gifts, gold bangles, earrings, and some expensive clothing. He sent him to Kirkiriya Bar Barua saying, 'I am sending you some gifts. Please accept them. I will make you the Bar Phukan.' Duliya Barua took these gifts, but sent word to Hula that 'The king wants to kill you, so he has sent gifts to Bhaga-Batbarua.' But Kirkiriya Deka Phukan did not accept the gifts from the king and sent them back. Duliya Barua went back to Hula and reported everything. The Deka Phukan was removed from his office, and Duliya Bar Barua was appointed as the new Phukan.

Hula left Gohain-Paniphukan at Kaliabar and came to the bank of the Sunai river. The king learnt of this and sent the Phukan Barua to give a naval battle to Hula and his men. In this battle many soldiers were killed. There was also a battle near the lion motif door. Hula won the battle. Hula sent his brother, Bhatdhara Phukan, and Nisau's son, Ramdhan Naobaisa, to imprison the king. When these men tried to pick the golden platter standing in front of the king, he absued them declaring, 'You are sons of Lukhurakhan' and threw the platter at them. When the king was taken to Charaideo, he asked for a handful of rice which he cast and cursed, 'There will be great misfortune in this country.' The king's food was poisoned and he died soon after eating it. He had ruled for three years. 273

The youngest Samuguri Prince ascended to the throne. Soon after, he ordered that the Kirkiriya Phukan should be blinded. Chakrapani was removed and was replaced by his brother, Maringa, who was appointed as the Bar Barua. His brother, Bhatdhara was made the Bar Phukan. Hula himself became the chief minister. The young king made his township at Meteka. Hula practically ruled the kingdom. Dighala Gohain had ony the Jokaisukiya people under his command.

One day, a bear came into the compound of Hula's chang. The Hiloighariya Muluna said it indicated misfortune and to prevent it Hula should offer 'a loved one in sacrifice to the Mother Goddess'.[252] When the Phukan asked his wife, she suggested that instead of her another loved one should be offered. He asked, 'But who do I offer?' She replied, 'Give a Madha[253] or a Bhutai.'[254] When they heard this, they attacked the Phukan at night and killed him. His brother, Bhatdhara fled to Bengal. Bhandar Rajkhowa was appointed as the Bar Barua. Bhatdhara's father and his son were

252. This is very interesting reference depicting the admixture between the Muslims and Hindus in Assam. Mulana is a corruption of the Persian Mawlana, meaning a priest. In this context, the Muslim priest advises the noble to perform a Hindu ritual to placate the Mother Goddes. Mir Jumla's chronicler Shahbuddin Talish had observed that the Assames Muslims were called Muslims only in name, but they were no different from their Hindu neighbours.

253. A disciple of Madhava Deva, the renowned successor of Sankardeva, who was the founder of Vaishnavism in Assam.

254. A Bhutanese?

put to death. Now the Bura Gohain performed the duties of the chief minister. The Bar Gohain was removed from his position at Kaliabar and in his place Laithepena Halal Gohain was appointed as the Bar Gohain at Kaliabar. This message was sent to the king. Once again, Bhatdhara fled from the Bengal camp. Lara Raja had a lot of misfortune. The strings of the dula broke and a cow gave birth to a buffalo. He was killed and Gadadhar Singha became the king. Lara Raja had ruled for two years. 274

After one year the king fought against the Bengalis. In this battle the Bengalis lost. Their commander Manjur Khan fled from the field. Our men seized a lot of their war implements. The Bhutia paiks, each received a piece or two of silver. After a year, Bihparuwa Phukan, Dihingia Bar Barua's brother, Paniphukan, Namdangiya Phukan, Senglai Phukan were killed so that they could not instigate any more rebellion. Dighala Bura Gohain was also executed and Laithepena was made the chief minister. Hen Bhaga Bar Gohain was killed for being insolent. In Tungkhang, they dug a pond in which the water was refined with mercury. A daul was constructed in the Charaideo hills.

Thereafter, the Thakurias were taken to Namrup and punished severely. The brahmans were taken to Toklai. A stone bridge was constructed to connect to Tungkhang. Two dauls were built on either side. Excepting the brahmans, gonak, kayashta and kalitas - the men of the four castes - it was decided that the rest of the populace should be brought together. The Saudangs cooked in one huge pot and the food was distributed among all the people. The Vaishnava priests of Dhakinpatia Satra were humiliatd in great measure. The disciples were also punished. The Handique and the Bar Phukan were instructed to build a daul in Umananda and seven villages were donated for the maintenance of brahmans. Rupai Da Dhara complained to the king about Azan Fakir[255] whose eyes were plucked out. Realizing that the fakir had miraculuous powers the king gifted a large tract of revenue free land and many servants to work in the estate. In saka 1608, the king made his town in Barkala. He ruled for fourteen years. 275

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255. A famous Sufi saint. We can not ascertain to which silsila he belonged, but it seems he single handedly spread Islam in Assam.

His eldest son, Rudra Singha, ascended to the throne. After one year, he built a fort at Teji, a reservoir was constructed in Dimau, which was consecrated in Phagun. A stone bridge was built in Namdang. In that year, three dauls were built in Jaisagar and one in Ranganath. But in one year the temple was destroyed. Human sacrifice was performed to placate the forces. The town called Rangpur was also built. The Manas river was fixed as the boundary and all the brahmans and mahantas in the kingdom were invited. For three days and three nights they were entertained and given plenty of gifts. Copper, bell-metal, brass, silver, gold, expensive textile and various other things were presented to them.

In the tenth regnal year, he fought against the Kacharis. Dihingia Deka Barua was deputed as the leader. Our army followed the course of the Dhansiri river. Phulbarua's son, Paniphukan, followed with his men along the Kapili. When the two armies advanced towards the Kachari kingdom, the king fled from his kingdom. Our men got a lot of their cattle and men. After defeating them, our army returned. On the return journey, the Deka Barua died. A year latter, the Jaiantia king decided to contest our might by taking up the cause of the Kachari king. But our forces managed to arrest the outbreak of war, instead both the Jaiantia and Kachari kings were invited to Bishwanath, where Rudra Singha received them with a lot of gifts and presents. The Kachari king was sent back to his kingdom and our officer, Mayur Majumdar accompained him. The Jaiantia king was taken to Rangpur and killed there. Our king performed the rites for the deceased king. The oldest son was installed as the new king.

When Laithepena died in Bishwanath, Halal Gohain's son, Kamalakanta Rajmau, was appointed as the Bar Gohain. Sengkeng, the Bar Patra Gohain of Kenduguri was appointed as the chief minister. Namrupiya Gohain was sent back to Namrup. Patra was made the Bar Barua. Since Buradihingia was appointed as the Bar Phukan, he was permitted to sit in the room with the Bar Phukan. Earlier the Bar Phukan used to sit in the room with the Bhitoruwal Phukan.

In order to fight the Bengalis, our men tried to strengthen their position by making alliances with the Raja of Amber and Behar, Rupanarayan. He said, 'Come to my aid from the western

side. I will sack Delhi. You don't have to pay me any tax.' The Raja of Amber sent this message to the other Hindu kings and they agreed to assist our men. The king deputed the senior most Gohain as commander and declared him as his heir apparent. The other four Gohains were also honored with covered aruwans. In all, including the Daflas, Mishimi, Kachari, and the Jaiantias, now the army was one hundred and twenty thousand men. The Bar Gohain, Rajmau's father, Bura Gohain Khampaat, Bar Patra Sengkong, the Bar Barua, and a bairagi marched ahead. On reaching Kalhila, the younger aunt of the Handique, Kunwaridevi, gave birth to a son. The army had to halt but the king tried to keep himself busy. In sake 1636, he died in Guwahati at the end of his nineteenth regnal year. 276

His oldest son ascended to the throne. He returned to Garhgaon and immediately removed Patra and appointed Duara Bijay as the Bar Phukan. Patra Bar Phukan had many boils and died soon after. His twelve sons were taken to Namrup and three others were kept in Tungkhang. The new king ascended to the throne in the Singorighar and took the name Siva Singha. In his reign Dhai Ali was constructed. Gayan's daughter was made the chief queen and was given the name of Barraja. A coin was minted on the occasion. When the Bar Patra died, Putha was made the chief minister. When he died, Kalugoyan Hainath Bar Gohain was appointed as the chief minister. In Namdang they dug a pond and three temples to Vishnu, Siva and Mother Goddess, respectively were built therein. The Kalugoyan Bar Gohain was made the Bar Patra and later the chief minister. The non-Arotiyas,[256] including those from Lakhimpur, were put to death. Baragi was removed from his position as a Barua and in his place Bura Phukan was appointed as a Barua. Bakatiyal Rapchandra was appointed as the Bar Barua. The Muwamara Mahantas[257] of Hilikhataliya and the Krishna devotees were forced to bow before the Mother Goddess.

256. Literally, 'those who did not offer worship to the icons'. Sometimes the appellation Arotiya is also used for the Rati-khuwa peoples among the Ahoms. The Rati-khuwa or 'night eaters' is a secret sect about which very little is known.

257. This sect is alternatively known as Muwamara/Mayamara/Muwamoria. It is a Vaishnavite sect whose leader was Anirudha Deva, who broke away from the main line of the Mahpurushiyas or Sankarias. The Muwamaras became the most formidable opponents to the Brahmanised Tai-Ahom royalty.

Blood of the sacrificed animals was smeared over their body and they were made to partake the prasad from the temple.

On the death of the Barraja, her sister, Draupadi, who was married to Halal Gohain was taken in marriage by the king and re-named Ambika. Her sons from the former marriage were left with their father, Ramnath. A reservoir was built on the other side of the Dikhou river and three temples were built there. In Kalugaon, two more dauls were also built. At Satay Ali, Rajmau also built a temple. The reservoir at Mesagarh was dedicated, once again, in the Hindu way and a human sacrifice was made on this occassion. Four brick houses were built in Rangpur and the king's living quarters were re-done in brick. The Rangghar was also built. The plinth of the Kamakhya temple at Guwahati was renovated. A temple was constructed at Ashaklanta and also in Dirgheswari. When Ambika Konwari died, Kalugoyan Bar Patra's wife was taken in marriage by the king and she was made the chief queen. The king died in saka 1766.[258] He ruled for thirty years.[259] 277

On his death, Saringiya Gohain became king. Kalugohain was removed from his office and sent off to Udalguri where he died. Bar Patra Dihingia's son, Thanunatha, was removed from his position as the Bar Gohain, and in his place Satayaliya Thangseng Bar Gohain was appointed as the chief minister. The two doors, Garhgaon duwar and Sunpur duwar were remade in brick. The house inside the Darika duwar was also rebuilt. In Guwahati, Rudreshwar,[260] Hukreshwar and Nilachal, three temples were

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258. This is the only instance we get this date. All other buranjis I have checked so far date it to saka 1666 or 1744 A.D.

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260. This was the most noteworthy structure built by Swargadeo Pramatta Singha. There are two separte structures. One is a raised platfrom of considerable height and space and the other is a temple with a mandapa resting on the platfrom. The scheme of this temple is like the mausoleums of the great Mughals, such as the tombs of Safdar Jung and Humayun. The roof of the mandapa and the vimana have not survived. It appears that this structure was conceived in keeping with the secular emphasis of the reigning king. Since it was made in the memory of Rudra Singha it was built both as a temple and as a mausoleum (Sharma, *Architecture*, p. 119).

constructed and so too a temple was built in Bishwanath Thapana. The king stayed in Bishwanath for two months. He died soon after returning. He ruled for six years. 278

His brother, Ramanath Gohain, was installed as the new king. After he ascended to the throne, he exiled his older brother-in-law to Namrup. He ascended to the throne in the Singorighar and took the name of Rajeshwar Singha. In Rangpur and Garhgaon, the Talatal Ghar was redone in brick. Also a Rangsuwa daul was constructed.[261] In Guwahati, temples were built in Manikaneshwar and in Bashishta. Alliances were made with the kings of Manipur and the Kachari people through Kirti Chandra Bar Barua and they came to our court to pay respect to the Swargadeo. After Khanseng Bar Gohain was killed, his brother, Numali Bar Gohain was made the chief minister. On his death, Lesengiyal Bartu became the chief minister. The king went to Guwahati and made his residence on the northern banks of the Barnadi. He visited all the deva temples. During his return journey, Kenduguria Bar Patra Gohain died. After him Lesengiyal became the Bar Patra Gohain. Some men hatched a plot and attacked the Bar Barua on the way. After a thorough inquiry, Ratikanta was hacked to death, Hangiyaar Hana was killed and Dekiyal Barua was put on the stake. The king died before the consecration ceremony of the temple at Devargaon.[262] He ruled for nineteen years. 279

In 1691, twentieth Bhado, in Devargaon, Kalihiliya Gohain became the new king. He cremated the body of his brother at Simaluguri. The younger Gohains were sent off to Namrup. After six months, Ragha Moran expelled the king and installed Ramakanta in his place. Lakshmi Singha was placed in the Bardaul. Later, when it was reported by Tamuli Bar Phukan that there was a plot to imprison Ramakanta, the Bar Gohain, Bura Gohain and the

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261. According to an unpublished source called *Agar Din, Etiyar Din*, a Tatti called Ghanasyam was invited by Swargadeo Rajeshwar Singha to Assam. He designed the small Ranghar close to the big Ranghar. This structure does not exist any longer. In other sources, Ghanasyam is presented as the famous architect of Rudra Singha. The confusion needs to be clarified before we can date the Tai-Ahom masonry structures. (See *Agar Din, Etiyar Din*, B3-MS 15).

262. This is the famous Negheriting daul. Pratap Singha made the first daul in Devargaon. But it was destroyed due to floods and the new daul was moved to the top of the hill. The stairwell of the later daul was built from the materials of the old daul.

Bar Phukan - these three were put to death. Prior to this incident Kirti Chandra Bar Barua was put on the stake. His son, Dekabarua, along with Dhekiyal Phukan, Khanikar Barua, Habiyal Barua, Thanu Deka, and many others were killed in front of the horse stable at the Rangpur entrance.

But our people could no longer tolerate the misdoings of the Moran. The young son of Naobaisa Phukan in consultation with many others decided to find the Moran and take him as their prisoner. Khanseng Bar Gohain's son, Bailung Bar Gohain, Ghashyam Bura Gohain, Maran Bar Patra, Bhadrahen Barbarua, Gabharu Putek Naobaisa Phukan, Bar Gohain Bilatiya Kalita Phukan, Jada Tamuli Ramkrishna, they all decided to kill Ragha. Ramakanta was brought from Betbari and killed. Muwamara Mahanta Satubhurja was also killed.

After ascending to the throne, Railung Bar Gohain was made the chief minister. Since the Bar Gohain complained, Lesengiyal Bar Patra's brother, Sarugandhala, killed the new Phukan. Sakiyakhowa Nandala was killed by the Narar. The king sent the Bar Patra to fight against them. After some time the three brothers of Bhadrasen Bar Barua - Niyayhudha Phukan, Baga Deka and Bhaluka Senga Dhekiyal Barua - were put to death. The Gohain's grandson was also killed. Akara and Bhakara's were blinded. He ascended to the throne in the Singorighar and took the name of Lakshmi Singha. The Kalita Phukan was removed from his office and the commander who was sent to fight the Naras in the north was put to death. At the time he was in the Bardaul he had befriended Kakati Siva Khangia, who was now appointed as a Phukan. A Naga was appointed as the Majumdar. The temple at Devargaon was consecrated. A reservoir was built in Jerenga.[263] Also a temple was built there. Another daul was built in Phoolonibari. In Alikekuri, Rajmau built a temple. The Bura Gohain won the battle against the Moran. The Naga Majumdar read the letter which came from Calcutta. The king died in 1702 after ruling for eleven years. 280

263. Legend has it that Jaimati, the wife of Gadapani (who later took the name Gadadhar Singha) was tortured and put to death in this field by her husband's rivals.

His son, Gaurinath Singha became the king. It was reported by Bialung Bar Gohain on the report received from Adabaria Barbarua that the Parbatiya princess wanted to make her adopted son the next king. On hearing this the king put to death the father and four sons of the Bailung Gohain. The Bar Patra was made the chief minister. The Parbatiya Bar Barua was removed from his office and Namatiyal was made the Bar Barua. On second Phagun, he ascended the Singorigarh were he killed a buffalo and took the name, Gaurinath Singha. The Naga Majumdar was presented with special gifts.

The Muwamorias set fire to the Singorigarh. Ghashyam Bura Gohain and the Bar Phukan gave a tough fight and drove them out of Rangpur. Many Muwamorias died. The chief minister ordered that the four sons of Adabariya Barua should be blinded.

The reservoir of Rudra Sagar was consecrated. The pond at Alikekuri Naphuk was also consecrated. A battle between the Ahom and the Naras took place in Sadiya, in which our men won.

Thereupon, the mahajan at Naruwa was humiliated. When he returned the king was frightened. Later, he married Phuta Deka's daughter and there was royal celebration on this occasion. The Muwamoria and the Dafla-Bahatas joined together and fought agaisnt our men, in which Marangi Khowa Dihingia Phukan was killed. Later the Bar Patra Gohain and the Guwahati Dihingia fought against them and broke up their alliance. They attacked the Muwamoria Satra and killed many disciples and burnt the Satra. But the Satra at Sarusatra was not destroyed. The Mahanta of that Satra, Pitaambar, joined them and now their forces were large, once again. Auniaati Dakhinpat was made the commander. Our men attacked the Satras at Majuli and killed many of the disciples there. After crossing the Dihing, and on reaching the Sunai river, they saw a lot of Muwamorias. Hence the Bura Gohain, Naobaisa Phukan, Chuladhara Phukan, Kharghariya Phukan left. Near Naduwa they cursed the king and saying that they wanted to enjoy the Magh Bihu, returned. The Namatiyal Bar Barua fortified the fort with three layers of wooden barricades. Bar Patra Gohain was removed from his position for fleeing from battle. The Muwamorias returned after Magh Bihu to Rangpur and gave battle. They burned down the houses of the Phukans and Baruas. Kakatiyal Barsenpati died in the

battle. The Deodhais fled and Hati Barbora was maimed by the Muwamorias.

The king placed the Bar Patra Gohain on the main entrance, on the new entrance he placed the Bura Gohain, on the entrance to Paniduwar he placed the Naobaisa Phukan and at Auguri he stationed the Bar Gohain. The Morans won the battle against our men. Namatiyal Bar Barua was removed and Dihinigia Harudeva was made the Bar Barua. The king came out through the Pani duwar and boarded a boat at Amguri. With him the Na-Gohain's father and son, the Saring Phukan's uncle and nephew, the Bhitoruwal Phukan, twenty Kathmiya,[264] and Naobaisa went to Guwahati. The Muwamorias entered and killed Rajmau. The princess fled. The treasury was looted and set asunder.

They entered Garhgaon and looted the various store houses of gold. They killed many of our men and set the town on fire.

Patkonwar declared himself as the king and entered Garhgaon. He appointed Kanugaonyan as the Bar Patra. Jula Katani Hazarika was appointed as the Bar Gohain, and Manjai was appointed as the Bar Barua. Muluk Saikia, the head of the Saudangs was made the Nauhaliya Phukan and became a favoured officer of the king. He also fought the Muwamorias at Alikekuri. Japara Gohain, Barmura Gohain - these officers were outside the capital fighting the Muwamorias in various places. All of them fled from their houses. The Muwamorias fought against Paniphukan Bura Gohain near Gaurisagar Namdang. The Bar Patra Gohain made Bhula Senapati as the Bar Barua, his son Helang was made the Chuladahar Phukan, Chetia Jabar became the Dhekiyal Phukan, Konwar Dharam was made a Neog Phukan, Miri Handique Govinda was made the Dekaphukan, and Kihingia Niyahudha Phukan's son was appointed as the Naobaisa Phukan. All of them went and gave battle to the Muwamorias in which they killed Muwamoria Bengmoriya Dangaria and his son. Later Konwar Neog Phukan was also killed. Before this incident they killed Bareghar and Budhbari Mahanta. Bura Gohain Paniphukan fought against them. The Bura Gohain fled after breaking their stockade. He died on his way.

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264. Wood workers from Bengal. In Assam, the term Miya is used to refer to Bengali Muslims.

In this way when the Manipurias tried to fight, too, they were defeated and sent back to their kingdom.[265] The Bura Gohain and Dighala Gohain made their fortification near Disoi and waited there. Japara Gohain made Basar Jabarak the commander and came to consult with the Bura Gohain in order to install his son as the king. Instead, he was killed, and buried in the khat at Amguri. The Bengalis were called in to fight. They (the Muwamorias) fought with the Bura Gohain over and over again and caused much destruction around the kingdom.[266] 281

265. The Manipurias were the people of Manipur. The intercourse between the kingdom of Assam and Manipur was not always hostile. In 1794, when a British contingent arrived in Garhgaon, they found a Manipuri contingent in the service of the Swargadeo. (For details, see *Burman Empire and the Kingdom of Assam*, Calcutta: 1839, pp. 151-52).
266. The editor's note mentions that the rest of the folios are missing. This buranji has ten folios written on both sides.

Chronicle V

The reigns of Swargadeo Jayadhvaj Singha and Chakradhvaj Singha

In saka 1570, based on the accusation that some of the Bar Gohain's attendents wanted to harm the king Swargamaharaja Jayadhvaj Singha, thirteen men were put to death. In saka 1571 there were three earthquakes. On the eighth day of Phagun, the king ascended to the throne in the Signorighar. The next day, on Friday, he sat on the throne. For seven days there were royal celebrations and a large amount of gold and silver were given in charity to brahmans. Got paiks received twenty taka each.[267] Every person received a measure of salt and rice. 282

In 1572, the king's sister-in-law was given in marriage to the Bura Gohain, but the king took her in and conferred on her the position of Parbatiya Konwari. On fourth Bhado, saka 1573, an owl entered the king's house in Garhgaon. After thirteen days the royal drums sounded on their own. In that same month a part of the Dihing river turned red. On seventh Bhado, a snake entered the temple of the Mother Goddess.

On tenth Aahin, 1575, a fort was built in Dipholumukh. The king caught a number of elephants in Lasupar. On fifth Kati, 1757, the Bar Barua died. After eleven days the king set out for Narayanpur. On nineteenth Puh, a fort was built on the side of the Sumsiri. On seventh Phagun, one thousand pieces of silver were stolen from Charaideo. A search made. The thieves were found and one hundred of them were put to death. 283

In Bahag, saka 1577, lightening struck Rajmaudeva's house. In that very month, the eldest princess pledged to mat her hair and become a sanyasi. In Aghun, the king ordered for straightening the

267. The paiks belonging to a designated got or group. Each got had four men and were assigned to an officer in denominations of twenty, hundred and thousand.

road connecting Kenduri to Har Mati. On twenty-second Puh, the king laid the foundation of a reservoir in Bhatiyapar. The officers of the kingdom were rewarded with gifts commiserate to their position. And charity was given to the invalid and the general populace of the kingdom. On fourth Aahar, 1576, lightening struck Lakurideva's house. On sixth Aahar, the foundation for Aauniaati Gohain's house was laid. In Phagun, lightening struck the Barbhandar. On twentieth Bahag, 1579, the king entered the Barhulung. On fifth Aahar, the king captured elephants near Sumsiri. Later in the month lightening struck the area around the reservoir of Bhotiyapar. 284

In 1580, Mirza Nathula, the thanadar of Guwahati, fled without giving battle. Our men captured many of his soldiers and horses.

In 1581, the king summoned his three ministers and said, 'We have fought with the Bengalis on many occasions for the territory of Kamarupa. I wish to destroy that kingdom. What do you say?' Barukiya Langichetia Bar Gohain, Kenduguria Bar Patra Gohain, Kunoygoyan Lasan Gohain, the king's father-in-law Phukan Rajmantri, consulted among themselves and sent Baduli Phukan to tell, 'The kingdom of Parikshit should be attacked by the Bar Baruas at Kamarupa and his entire people destroyed and brought to Garhgaon.' On hearing this Chandraratra and Pratapratra left their jobs and reported this to the Bengalis, who thereupon marched to Garhgaon. 285

At this time, Mir Jumla, Shah Jahan's general who had come in pursuit of Prince Shuja, sent word from Dacca to the king's father-in-law, Phukan Rajmantri. He said, 'Leave Guwahati. I am sending an Amir. I will not come personally.' The Bar Phukan replied, 'I am sending Sanata and Hala as my envoys. We have not attacked Guwahati. Bhabanath Karzi had attacked Guwahati. First take Behar then ask for Guwahati.' This was conveyed by the two ambassadors to Mir Jumla. He replied, 'Behar is nothing when compared to our power. I will send an Amir and take it. Even then if the Ahoms refuse to leave Guwahati, I will lead my troops upstream along the Lohit and take Garhgaon.' He sent the Ahom envoys with this message. 286

Since this arrangment was made, Pranarayan went to the mountains.[268] Prananarayan promised to pay two lakhs of silver. After making this arrangement, a nawab was posted in Behar and he brought Bhabanath along with him. Mir Jumla halted near Manas. Once again, he sent his man Sheikh Miyan to the Bar Phukan saying, 'The nawab had said that he will first take Behar and then Guwahati. Now he has taken Behar, so leave Guwahati.' But the Bar Phukan refused to surrender Guwahati. The envoy from Bengal addressed our men saying, 'Your Bar Phukan has a body of gold and a face of a swine. He cannot make decisions. He told us that if you can take Behar, Guwahati will be ours. But he speaks a lot of lies. He will soon suffer the consequences.' 287

The king had gone to Toklai to catch elephants and on his return sent the Bar Gohain and the Bar Patra Gohain to Samdhara. In Phagun, Baduli Phukan saw the Bengalis in Lakhtokia[269] and therefore, he and his men returned to Pandu Saraighat. In the meantime, Mirja Mula, Dalal Khan, Munawar Khan, Manjur Khan, Rashid Khan, Sautsana, Raja Narasingha, Amarsingha - these Umaras advanced toward the southern section to Kajalimukh and the others toward the north to Agiathuri. An amir was sent to Shah Buruj. Phukan Piksai Chetia consulted with the officers and asked, 'Now that the Bengalis have surrounded us how do we protect ourselves?' They left Pandu-Saraighat and came to Samdhara. 288

The king removed his father-in-law from the position of Senapati and gave the hengdan to the Bar Gohain. On the southern flank, Au Gohain was put in charge, the naval fleet was placed under the command of Tamadlai and Garaibirika. A relative of the king was conferred the title of Saring Raja. Bahgarihiya Aatan Gohain was appointed as the Bura Gohain and sent to Samdhara. The others halted in Samdhara for four days. The Bengali army had advanced to Simulugarh from where they gave battle. One day, the Bengali army faced our forces directly on the banks of the Lohit river. The fleets were ready against each other. The fort here was rather small. Habungiya, who was the keeper of the royal elephants was also there. The Bengali army attacked after ten days on learning that our men were thoroughly disadvantaged. Our forces fled. At

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268. Here the reference is to Bhutan.
269. Within the city limits of modern Guwahati.

night, the Bar Gohain set fire to the bhandar and fled. Our men fled from both north and south and halted at Hala. The Bengalis halted at Kukurakata. Our men captured a few of them. But unable to capture them, fled to Garhgaon. 289

On seventh Sot, the two princes - Saldhara and Durabh - were executed. After fourteen days, Raisa's house was destroyed by a fire. In the morning they left for Tipam. There the king stayed for twenty two days, and then went to Namrup. In 1583, the Bengalis entered Garhgaon. One party stayed there and on second Phagun, saka 1584, Majim Khan went to Bakubari. At Namrup, the king ordered that, 'Anyone who comes across a Bengali should kill him immediately.' He appointed Bejdali's son, Manthir Bhandari Barua, as the officer-in-charge of this task. They came and halted at Bakota. Our men stayed near the north bank of the Dili river and from there organized raids against the Bengalis, many of whom were killed. Bejdali's son decided to make peace with the Bengalis on his own disregarding the other officers. This was reported to the king by his father-in-law who received this information from some officers. The king summoned him to Namrup and assassinated him. His four brothers were also killed. Our forces managed to drive the Bengalis from the Dili river to the Dihing river. At Murakata, Bahgarhiya Bar Gohain fought the Bengalis. He fought for a few hours but failing to continue the battle had to flee. The Bengalis halted at Tipam. The king left Namrup and halted in Namsang. 290

After consulting with the Tipam Raja and his chief minister, the king deputed Sultan Gariya to make overtures of friendship to Dalal Khan. Sultan went to Dalal Khan's camp and conveyed the message. Dalal Khan and Mirza Mula consulted and sent their envoy Gaday to the king's father-in-law, the chief minister. They demanded, 'Give us a daughter of the Ahom king for the Badshah. Also give four lakhs of silver. If you refuse we will attack Namrup.' When the king heard this, he said, 'Well it is better to give what they have demanded and thus save the kingdom. Father-in-law, please send our men to the court in Bengal and tell them that whatever your men have asked us we will give.' The king's daughter, who was the grand-daughter of Mumai Tamuli, Nangsong Gabhoru, was gifted to the Badshah's son. A number of slaves and servants accompanied her. Also a great deal of silver, gold and other articles of gifts, clothing and food were sent. 291

The Bengalis said, 'Half of the promised amount and ninety elephants have not been sent. Hence give us the three sons of the three ministers and also the son of the chief minister. When you make the entire payment we will return the hostages.' The king sent the three sons of the three ministers - Barukilya Langisang Bar Gohain's son, Dhala Gohain, Kenduguri Bar Patra Gohain's son, Langi Gohain (Bahgariya Gohain did not have any son) hence the king's nephew, Ramrai Gohain, and finally the chief minister's son, Mowpiya, were sent to the court in Bengal. The king returned from Namrup. He had sent the boys while he was in Namsang, in saka 1584. The Bengalis left Tipam and returned to Guwahati. Rashid Khan was appointed the Thanadar of Guwahati. He said, 'When we get the silver and the elephants as you have promised we will return the boys.' The Khane-Khana Nawab returned to Delhi. The king sent Bahbariya Bhabananda as an escort with his daughter. A kotoki also accompanied the princess. The Khane-Khana died on his way. 292

Maharaja arrived at Tangdan. From there he proceeded to Mekurikhuwalay and then to Bokata. He sent a message to Dalal Khan's court through Abhayapuria Saturbhuj. He appointed Dhumai Deka as the Bar Phukan and sent him to Kaliabar. He stayed in Kaliabar for six months and died there. Au Gohain's son, Langi, was appointed as the Bar Phukan and deputed to Kailabar. 293

The Khane-Khana sent two envoys to our court - Dur Beg and Rustum Beg. Dalal Khan met with the envoys at Patna and he sent Bahbariya Kakati with them. He also sent his envoy Gaday along with them. Bahbariya left the Badshah's envoys at Guwahati and went to the capital with Gaday. He reported to the king that the Badshah has sent two of his envoys to our court with a sirpaw. The king replied, 'My ancestors have never worn the Badshah's dress. I would prefer death than wear his garment.' He sent Laudeka, Lakhtakia, and Bahbariya Kakati to escort the envoys to the court. Rashid Khan sent Tayad Khan and Shah Kamal with the Mughal ambassador. 294

The king, Jayadhvaj Singha visited the fort at Garhgaon. He suffered from jalahar[270] and died in Bokata after nine days. He died on twenty third Kati, saka 1585. He ruled for fifteen years and nineteen days. 295

The king did not have a male issue. The three ministers were consulted by the other officers and they agreed to install Saring Raja as the new king. He was brought to the capital the very next day and declared the new Swargadeo. This king lived in Bokata where a royal house was built for him. On ninth Aghun, he moved to Lesang where he made his residence. 296

On eleventh Phagun, Ram Brahman, Ganak Deka, and Sanatan Kataki reported to the king's father-in-law that, 'Neog's son is planning to harm the king.' On being informed of it the king imprisoned the Phukan and his brother, Lesai, at Paniduwar. His newphews Sikan, Langsa, Luksa, Khamsang, Harih, Tulam - all six of them were killed. He sent Lang Hengdandhara to say, 'Since the minister knows a great deal about all this I will not kill you. But you have to tell me all you know.' The minister sent a rude reply to the king. The king then ordered that the minister's brothers should be put to death. They were put on the stake. 297

The eldest princess was promised the position of the chief queen. Due to the complaint against the Phukan, the princess was imprisoned in the chuladhar bhandar.[271] A gonak, Majumdar was sent to ask her what she knew of the plot. He conveyed the king's message which said, 'I was in Saring. I have been installed as the king with the aid of your uncle. Now that same uncle wants to get rid of me. Why is that so?' The princess replied, 'What do I know what my uncles are doing? I had always wanted to go with my husband. Now you are stopping me from performing my duties as a wife.' This was reported to the king. On thirteenth Phagun, she was taken to the hill to be executed. In Sout, one day, suddenly the royal drums were sounded twice. And once on the day of the cow worship in Magh Bihu. 298

On thirtieth Sout, saka 1585, the king gave in marriage the eldest daughter of Jayadhvaj Singha to Samdhara Bar Barua's son.

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270. Diabetes.
271. The storehouse where the royal garments were kept.

On twenty fourth Bahag, 1586, the king entered the Singorigarh. That night he ascended to the throne. He took the name, Chakradhvaj Singha. On twenty sixth Phagun, a meteor fell to the ground. On eighteenth Jeth, the king planted a tree. That very day the Bar Barua's daughter was installed in the Hathichangi. That year, Mumai Tamuli Bar Barua's son, Bartuk was appointed as the Naobaisa Phukan. In Aghun, a special feast was organized for the brahman astrologers. In Puh, the king went for an elephant hunt to Tingrai and caught many of them. From there he sent Bahgarhiya Bura Gohain to construct a house at Padampukhuri. He returned from his elephant hunt and stayed in this house for sometime. In 1586, sixth Sout, a vulture attacked Debera's dula. There was a strange sight in the skies on twenty ninth Haun, saka 1587. Mars and Venus fought each other and the stars were visible in the skies even after sunrise. 299

The king addressed his ministers - Bahgarhiya Bura Gohain, Baghsuwal Bar Patra Gohain, Barukiyal Bar Gohain and all the other Boras, Baruas, Phukans, Rajkhowas and Hazarikas, etc. He said, 'I want to capture the Bengalis. What do you suggest?' The Bahgarhiya Gohain said, 'What the king says is quite right. But we hardly have any provisions in the kingdom. We are short of rice. How are we going to succeed against the Bengalis?' Everybody agreed to this. The king was angry with this reply. He said, 'I am a grandson of the Swargamaharaja. How can I pay tribute to the lowly Bengalis? I cannot be a vassal of the Bengalis.' He organized his men, including the captured foreigners in groups of ten, eight, six, etc. He took the best men and trained these men himself to shoot bows and arrows. He selected the efficient commanders from the Boras and the Saikias who were armed with bows, arrows, spears. They were given proper uniform and trained to fight the Bengalis. Lachit Phukan was the Duvaliya Bar Barua. The king was pleased with his bearing and courage and therefore appointed him as the Bar Phukan. Goyimela Bar Gohain's son was the Hengdandhara of the king. Now he was appointed as the Bar Gohain-Phukan. Pelan Phukan who was the Saringiya Phukan was appointed as a full Phukan. Miri-Handique Phukan was a Hazarika, he was appointed as a Phukan. 300

The soldiers were presented with earrings, clothing and other gifts and sent to fight the Bengalis. The Bar Barua, Phukan,

Hazarika, Rajkhowa were all given a variety of presents and sent to fight the Bengalis. The king said, 'You should be able to protect your wives and sons and the brahmans of this land. I will be proud of your victory against the Bengalis. If you cannot defeat them at Itakhuli, I will not spare you.' With these instructions, on third Bhado, Saha 1589, our army was sent off to Guwahati to fight against the Bengalis. 301

On seventeenth Bhado, our men captured two Bengalis at Bahbariya - Lal Beg and Rushon Beg - who were sent to the capital. In Aahin, they took Kajali. From there they proceeded to Itakhuli and fought there.

But they were not able to defeat the Bengalis. Pelan Phukan declared, 'Anyone who can defeat them at Itakuli, I will become his slave.' When the king heard this he sent Papang Saudang Barua and Hati Hazarika, along with Rupapara Hati's son with an axe and a pair of woman's clothing saying, 'Go kill some of Pelan Phukan's men. He has uttered the unheard. Anyone who says he cannot perform the task make him wear the dress and thrash him with this stick.' They told all the Phukans and the Barbaruas what the king had told them. They all said, 'We have not heard Pelan utter such a statement. We do not know how come the king has come to hear of such things.' This they told the king on their return. The king did not say anything.

Realizing that the king was serious about his intention to defeat the Bengalis, the officers became serious in their task. Notwithstanding, they could not win a decisive victory. They poured water in the Bengali gunnery and destroyed their gunpowder. Later, on eleventh Kati, 1589, our men defeated the Bengalis at Itakhuli. From there they brought Syed Sana and Syed Piruj as prisoners. Two Bengalis fled after crossing the Lohit at Ashaklanta. Our army got a lot of war booty, war implements, gold-silver cloth, brass, copper, etc. Mowpiya Phukan was also rescued. They all consulted and sent Kaupatiya Kotoki to report this to the king. The kotoki reported this to the king in private. The king listened to it and came out to the outer chamber....[272] 302

272. The chronicle abruptly ends here.

Chronicle VI

From the reign of Swargadeo Kamaleshwar Singha to Purandar Singha

On the death of Gaurinath Singha, alias Chaopha Suhitpungmung, Dighala Konwar's son became the new king. On becoming king, he took the Ahom name of Suklingpha and the Hindu name of Kamaleshwar Singha. The body of the former king was taken to Machkhowa and cremated there. The nobles were invited to a feast given in memory of the deceased. Milk, curd, jaggery, banana and sugarcane were served and on the tenth day the body was cremated. At the end of the month, the Gossains were invited to Jorhat and a big feast was performed according to Hindu rites. The ashes were taken to Charaideo. The urn was taken by Dhenu Dharia Konwar's service men and some of Patarchetia and Gharphaliya's men. Dihingia Phukan, Konwar's Hazarika and many other Baruas accompanied the men carrying the urn. They reached Nunihat. The Bar Gohain ordered the residents of the villages of Khelung, Baantung and Tingkhang to prepare the cemetery. With the permission of the Bura Gohain, Dhenudharia Bora raised a mound above the burial spot. 303

In lakli Laatplaw, or saka 1716, Puranimatiya Matak attacked our villages from the northern side and burnt down the houses and granaries. Thereafter, the Bura Gohain appointed a subedar and a jamadar along with a few men who were trained as soldiers to guard the territory. He trained eighteen companies. He provided them with flint-locks, kiris,[273] gun-powder, kurta,[274] cap, kamarbandh, drums, shields and pantaloons. Those who were able to complete the training program were awarded with gifts. They were able to

273. Malayan dagger.
274. Long shirts.

perform mock attacks wearing their new gear. In this way we had eighteen companies of trained soldiers. The Bura Gohain was delighted and celebrated the occasion with a lot of fun fare. 304

The king consulted with the Bura Gohain to ask Kunbaigoyan Deka Phukan to build a fortified town. The Deka Phukan went into Namsang where he built a fort and settled a village. He then went to Jabaka where he removed the older residents of the fort and established another village. At Baisa, in order to protect the village, a fort was constructed. In this way two forts were built - one at Gahoribari and another at Benganabari. So also in Nagahat. Around the fort a row of Aahat trees were planted. To guard that region a fauz of soldiers were posted.[275] This was well done. The Deka Phukan returned to Rangpur and told the Bura Gohain, 'We should improve the town of Rangpur.' The Bura Gohain agreed to this proposal. 305

Bura Gohain Phukan told Mesai Phukan, Deodhai Phukan, Bailung Phukan, Deodhai Barua, Mithaikhowa Barua and the other deodhais, 'We should organize a dampuja and give away gold and silver to enable the deceased king, Suhitpungmung, to join the ranks of our ancestors.' The Deka Phukan agreed to this and the fortification work which was started in Rangpur was completed and the worship of ancestors was performed. 306

Handique Bhumrakalia was appointed as the Bar Phukan. The Parbatiya princess' brother, Satayoli Gohain, was appointed the Bar Gohain. Kenduguria Puwali Gohain's son was appointed as the Bar Patra Gohain. Handique Bhadari was appointed as the Bar Barua. The grandson of the former Naobaisa Phukan was retained in the position of Naobaisa Phukan. Kunbaigoyan Naubaisa Phukan's son was appointed as the Deka Phukan. One of the clansmen of Miri Handique was appointed as the Dihingia Phukan. A clansman of Dihingia Phukan was appointed as Na-Phukan. The Bura Gohain appointed his brother as the Neog Phukan. Nine officers each were appointed as a Phukan, Barua, Rajhkowa, Hazarika, Saikia and Bora. 307

In lakli Khutngi or saka 1717-1718, the ministers consulted with the king and decided to send a force to capture the Bar

275. A battalion.

Senapati who was waging a war against the king.[276] A few days later the Bura Gohain told Mathan and Kudu, 'We should assemble the soldiers, subedar, Phukan, Barua, Hazarika, Saikia, Bora, Dhenudharia,[277] archers, Nakuwa Masai Phukan, Lephera Deodhai Phukan, Teka Barbailung, Bamun Barkataki, Bejbarua, Brahman, Gonak and Dalay together.' In this manner all of them were brought together. The Bura Gohain performed Rikhavan worship[278] to placate the gods. After fixing an auspicious day, the Bura Gohain went to the banks of the Tailau or Lohit river.[279] There he built a fort. A company of our soldiers were sent to fight against the Bar Senapati. Failing to give fight to the invading army the Bar Senapati fled to the forests. The army chased him. The subedar shot at the Bar Senapati and struck him with a bullet. The subedar then brought his body to the Bura Gohain. The Bura Gohain gave orders for the execution of the Senapati. 308

In Hagunkani, the soldiers besieged the royal storehouses and ransacked the grain and other articles. The raja of Hagunkani fled. His wealth and subjects fell into the hands of our soldiers. The king's four daughters were also left to the mercy of our men. The Bura Gohain bestowed one of the girls to Masai Phukan, another to Deodhai Phukan, the other to Barbailung and the fourth to the subedar. The Bura Gohain then returned to Jorhat, where he met with the king and the Saring Raja. From then on the Bura Gohain lived in Jorhat. 309

In lakli Rungmau, or 1718-19, the king and his officers, the Bura Gohain, Barua, Phukan, Rajkhowa, Hazarika, Saikia and Bora agreed to attack Hengaluguri and besiege Puranimatiya Matak. The Bura Gohain ordered that a fort should be built in Kherkatamukh. He deputed a Bora and a Mathan to Kherkatamukh to build a fort there. 310

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276. The ruler of the autonomous domain of Sadiya.
277. A special group of archers.
278. 'Rikh' - to call; 'Khun' - longeviety. This worship was done to revive life. It could be performed for an individual and also for the kingdom at large to regain vitality and life substance (*Laitu or Lauphala*, trans. as *History of Assam* by Golapchandra Barua, Jorhat: Asiatic Press, 4th ed. 1977, pp. 3-12).
279. Tilau is the Tai-Ahom name for the Brahmaputra river, while Lohit or Lauhitya is the ancient Indian name for the same river.

On an auspicious day, the Bura Gohain gathered his officers - the Phukan, Rajkhowa, Hazarika, Saikia, Bora, Dhenudharia, archers and Baruas. He and his men, along with one Bhamrasingh, one Bajpuria, one Rapsingh, one Binasingh, five khels of Hatimuria, Nakuwa Masai Phukan, Lerela Deodhai Phukan, Simuluguria Barbailung and Kesabailung proceeded to Kherkatamukh and halted there. From there they attacked the village of Puranimatia Matak and destroyed it. Many Mataks were taken prisoner and their village was plundered of its wealth. The Bura Gohain loaded the boats with the war booty and came to Khutiaput. There they captured the family of Pitambar Mahanta. They returned by boat to Jorhat. In this war the Bura Gohain seized a great deal of war implements. He returned to Jorhat along with the men who went to the fight with him. In the meantime, the king and the Saring Raja armed the local people with clubs and spears and prepared them for war. A few days later, the Bura Gohain sent a company to Khutiaputa, to Jankhanamukh and another band to Mahagarh to catch Puranimatiya Matak. 311

In lakli Tausi, or 1719-20, Sengphalaringgam alias Singphobura invaded our country.[280] They entered into one of our forts and stayed there. Learning that the Singphos had come into the country and had intentions to destroy the kingdom, the king and his ministers, the Bura Gohain, Rajkhowa, Saikia, Phukan, Hazarika, and Bora assembled together and after due deliberations decided to fight the Singphobura and destroy him. The Bura Gohain ordered the Deka Phukan, Kaptan Gohain, Haru-Abhayapuria Rajkhowa, Bhamrasingh Subedar, Abhayapuria Rajkhowa, Pani-Abhayapuria Rajkhowa, Rapsingh, and Binasingh to fight against the Singpho. The Rajkhowas, Hazarikas, Saikias and Dhenudharia archers of the villages of Khelung, Bantung and Tingkhang joined the others against the Singphos. The Mohan Phukan, Deodhai Sengdhara Phukan, Bailung, Brahman, Gonak and Bej accompanied the army. Our army closed in on the fort where the Singphos were staying. The Singphos made a trench where they placed their cannon and waited for the enemy. Our

280. The chief of the Singhphos. The Singhphos are known as Jingphaw and Kachins in Burma. (For details see E. Leach, *Political Systems in Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure,* reprint ed., London: Athlone Press Ltd., 1986).

forces could not understand this war plan. But Bhamrasingh fired a big cannon and broke open the fort. The Singphos were unable to come out of the fort. They escaped. Our men entered the fort and plundered all their articles. They got many cows, buffalos, hens and other articles. The houses inside the fort were burnt to ashes. Once again, the army returned to Jorhat. 312

In lakli Kasau, or 1720-21, at Bengmara, Puranimatiya Matak raised a revolt against the king. A new king called Bharathi appeared on the scene. The king ordered the Deka Phukan, Kaptan Gohain, Rajkhowa, Hazarika, Saikia, Bora, Dhenudharai archers, Bhamrasingh Subedar, Bajupuri, Rapsingh, Binasingh and the people of the four villages of Khelung, Thenbaan, Tingkhang, Bantung, also Mohan, Phukan, Deodhai Sengdhura Phukan, Bailung, Brahman, Gonak and some other local Bej to proceed to war. They traveled day and night and reached Bengmara. Puranimatiya Matak and Bharathi Raja came out with their men and gave battle to our army. One of their men shot at the Bharathi Raja and killed him. His body was put in a boat and brought to Harbaibhaga. According to the instructions of the Bura Gohain his body was burnt down to ashes. The others returned to Jorhat. 313

In lakli Kapsingha, or 1721-22, tension broke out in Sadiya. One thousand Bar-Siringiya Kacharis, the Burharaja of Khamti, the Paninara, Phakeyal, Miri, Mishimi, Tekeliya-Naga, Muluk and Abors joined together and attacked the Sadiya Khowa Gohain and killed him.[281] They ransacked the Gohain's house and they took away his family and children. The king and the Bura Gohain assembled the officers together and decided to fight the enemies. The Dihingia Phukan, Nauhaliya Phukan, Bhitoruwal Phukan were made the commanders of a battalion and sent to fight. The Phukans loaded their naval fleet with all types of war implements and proceeded to give battle. They and the other men, like the Rajkhowa, Hazarika, Saikia and others reached Sadiya and waited inside the fort. A few days later, our army attacked the enemy with spears and daggers and killed many of them. Our men won the

281. It is interesting to note that among the rebels there were three groups of Tais - namely the Khamti, Paninara and Phakeyal. These communities are an important section of the Tai peoples of Assam, as well as, the Phakey and Atton speakers who have largely contributed in reviving the contemporary Tai-Ahom language.

battle. But the Khamti Raja, Phakeyal, Miri, Mishimi, Muluk, Khankhak and Abors joined together and once again gave fight to our army. But they could not continue the fight and fled. Our men killed many of them and won the battle. The Khamti Burharaja, the Phakeyal, Nara and Muluk were taken prisoner. The army returned and handed over the prisoners to the king and the Bura Gohain. The king did not kill these prisoners but let them stay on the lower banks of the Disau river near Simaluguri. A few others were settled in Baruarani. Tekeliya Nagas were put in Naphadwar, Muluks in Marangi and the Pani Naras in Titabarhat. 314

In that year, one of Kunbaigoyan Bura Gohain's clansmen, the grandson of Sadiya Khowa Gohain, was appointed as the Sadiya Khowa Gohain. The new Sadiya Khowa Gohain was presented with fine clothing, gold earrings, gold bangles and according to the instructions of the Bura Gohain he stayed in the town. He remained in his position of Sadiya Khowa Gohain from lakli Dhamputraisan Mungraw,[282] or 1722 until 1724. The Dihingia Phukan, Nauhaliya Phukan and Bhitaruwal Phukan - these three officers were with the Sadiya Khowa Gohain. Klangseng's grandson was appointed Nauhaliya Phukan. A few days later he died. The Sadiya Khowa Phukan remained in Sadiya. 315

In lakli Mungraw, or 1724-25, a man called Panimuwa appeared. A mahanta named Gajala began to propagate a religion called Ratikhuwa.[283] The villagers in league with the two leaders, Panimuwa and Gajala, decided to raise a standard of rebellion against the king and the Bura Gohain. On learning this, the king and the Bura Gohain sent Dulakahariya Bora, Kukurasuwa Bora and Saudang Bora to catch the miscreants. They did accordingly. The Swargadeo and the Bura Gohain questioned them, 'Why do you want to fight us?' Finding them guilty, Panimuwa was put in chains and the mahanta was put on an elephant and sent off to the

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282. An idiomatic usage probably implying several lakli years.

283. Krishna and Radha are conceived as Rasa and Rati among the Vaishnava Shajiya of Bengal. In this, man and woman are viewed as the representatives of the two flows of love - as the ultimate enjoyer and the giver - who with Madana or the exciting cause of love, attracts the beloved. In Assam, this sect performed their ceremonies in obscurity at night. Hence the appellation 'night-eaters'. (For a comparative analysis of its practises among the Hindu and Buddhists, see S. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1976).

forest. On questioning Panimuwa, the names of the other rebels were also found who were executed. Some were blinded and sent back home. Some were executed in front of the Barduwar and others were put on the stake. Panimuwa was not put to death immediately but was starved and killed slowly. 316

The Bura Gohain thought, 'I have royal powers, but I haven't been able to do anything extraordinary for posterity to remember me.' He called upon his officers and consulted with them about his idea. The Kukurasuwa Deodhai was called to consult the chicken legs and foretell whether the Bura Gohain will be able to establish a new town. A number of men were employed to establish a new town near Basa, in Jorhat. In that town a Barghar,[284] a Hulung and other houses were built. This new town was named Na-Nagar.[285] 317

In Baishak, the Mataks and the Kacharis joined together and attacked the villages in Tipam and destroyed them. The Guwahatiya Deka Phukan and Dulakhariya Barua agreed to proceed to Narikalguri and wait there. The next day our army fought against the enemy group. Initially they fired at each other, and later they fought with bows and arrows. In Dhinsi or the month of Jeth,[286] on a Monday of the Ahom day called Plekmit,[287] our army fought on the banks of the Kapili at Sangsaki. Making a loud noise the Mataks and Kacharis fell upon our army. Our men could not withstand the attack and they lost sixty of their men. Many archers and common soldiers fled and drowned in the Kapili river. Many others died and many fled. The Deka Phukan and Dulakahariya returned via the Kapili and halted at Raha. From there the Deka Phukan returned to Guwahati. The Dulakahariya went and took shelter in the Dulal Madhav Mandir. This was reported to the king and the Bura Gohain. 318

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284. An audience hall.
285. The New Town.
286. This is the fourth month in the Tai-Ahom calendar, and corresponds to fifteenth February to fourteenth March of the Gregorian calendar. The Assamese equivalent is Phagun-Sot and it is not Jeth as noted here. The month of Jeth in the Tai-Ahom calendar is Din-cit and is the seventh month in the cycle. The problem of dates and names occur many times in the buranjis.
287. According to the *Ahom Lexicon*, the Hindu Sumbar or English Monday is Ta-nang-la in the Tai-Ahom calendar. Plekmit is the thirty fifth lakli of the sixty year cycle of a Tai-Ahom era.

In lakli Plekmit or 1725, the king and the Bura Gohain sent another army to fight the Mataks. Kaptan Gohain, Basa Rajkhowa, many archers, some common soldiers and five subedars went to Khagarijan and halted there. They stayed there for quite sometime. 319

In Dinchipt[288] or Aahin, Puranimatiya Bhakat, Kachari, Dhekari, Lalung, Nowgaoniya Dhenudharia, two other Konwars, the Ghiladharia Hazarika, Khrung Madang from the Jaiantias, Phatika Khung Madang, Bar-Judgharia Matak, Maju-Jugdharia Matak and Saru-Jugdharia Matak - these men instigated a war against us by attacking the village of Dhenudhar at Nowgong and setting it on fire. The Basa Rajkhowa and Mesaghariya Bar Barua and their archers, common soldiers and other soldiers went to fight the enemy army. They came forward and attacked our army. Bar-Jugdharia, Maju-Jugdharia and Saru-Jugdharia fell in the battle. The Mataks began to flee crossing the Kalang river. Our army won the initial engagement and seized four cannons, four swords and five spears. The fleeing Mataks halted at Raha for the night. The next day, they headed towards Sangsaki and halted there. The archers, common soldiers, and regular soldiers commanded by Basa Rajkhowa proceeded to Raha. There they built a fort and stayed for a while. Kaptan Gohain, and the Bar Barua proceeded with their archers, soldiers and common soldiers to Bebejiya, where they built a fort and stayed there. 320

The Mataks and Kacharis entered the village of Dhenudharia and Nowgong. Once again they set on fire the villages of Putanihigiya and Bheleuguri, besides Dhenudhariya. Our army which was stationed there under the command of Kaptan Gohain and Dhenudharia Bar Barua decided not to retaliate the enemy attacks. Instead, they sent word to the king and the Bura Gohain concerning the recent developments. In Kati or Dinchipsang,[289] the king asked our army to go into battle. The Deka Phukan took his archers and two company of soldiers, loaded their war materials in many boats and proceeded to Birah-Bebejiya, where they made a fort and waited. 321

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288. The eleventh month in the Tai-Ahom year or fifteenth September to fourteenth October of the Gregorian calendar.
289. The twelfth month of the Tai-Ahoms covering the period between fifteenth of October to fourteenth November.

The Deka Phukan sent an envoy to Basa-Rajkhowa asking him to join him. The Basa Rajkhowa, along with Kaptan Gohain, the Hazarika, Saikia, Bora, Dhenudharia and Nowgongiya joined the Deka Phukan. The next day, the Deka Phukan, Basa-Rajkhowa and Kaptan Gohain crossed the Kalang and entered the Kachari kingdom. There they made a temporary stockade and halted for four days. On the fifth day, the Deka Phukan proceeded to a village called Lekdin. There he built a mud palisade and waited. The fort was guarded by Dhenudharia Gutaserak. The Mataks attacked our men and killed three dhenudharias. They also captured two spies. 322

The Deka Phukan halted at Tetelikhana. He went to Kapilikukh and coming across a serai chowki halted there. The Kacharis crossed the Kapili and attacked our army. They fired cannons at our men and wounded many of them. Four dhenudharias and four soldiers were wounded. One dhenudharia died. The wounded soldiers were taken to Kaptan Gohain's tent where three among them died. The Deka Phukan and the Basa Rajkhowa returned via the Kapili. They alighted from their boats and made a temporary stockade on the banks of the Kapili. Two soldiers were killed by the Mataks. Thereupon, the Bar Phukan sent word to Brahmasari Gohain to depute five more companies of soldiers. Brahmasari made arrangments, organized a naval fleet which followed the upstream course of the Lohit/Tilau river and reached Kapilimukh. Brahmasari made his military-outpost on the banks of the Kapili. After five days, the Deka Phukan, the Basa Rajkhowa, Brahmasari, Saikias, Boras left for Narikalguri and built a fort in Sunapur. 323

The Mataks and Kacharis joined together and recruited many new soldiers to fight our men. They enclosed Brahmasari's fort for two days. The Mataks and the Kachari soldiers fought against our men, but unable to continue the battle, they retreated. Kukurasuwa Nagariyal Mohan Barua and Meki Deodhai consulted the chicken legs and offered worship to the Mother Goddess and to other gods.[290] The two pandits performed their worship on the bank of

290. The Tai-Ahoms do not worship icons but Mother Goddess worship is an important element of their religion. This worship is called Hubasani Puja. It is done in privacy inside the barghar, i.e. inside the precints of a house. In this worship they offer one white goat, seven ducks, nine chickens and one pair of dove to the goddess. The meat is distributed among the deodhais and the general public.

the Kapili river. The Deka Phukan entered Bhitorgaon and stayed there for sometime. The next day, the Deka Phukan asked Kaptan Gohain, Kan Bar Barua and Pharichanda Subedar to make a fort in Dabaka. From Dhinchi-Dhinha, that is from Phagun-Bahag, our army stayed at Dabaka. The soldiers, bowbearers and archers entered Dabaka and burnt down the town and the surrounding villages. From one village, our soldiers got two thousand five hundred and sixty cows and sixteen buffalos. The soldiers returned with the booty to Demera and halted on the banks of the Kapili river. There they burnt the villages and seized three hundred and sixty cows. Then they returned. Kaptan Gohain, the Basa Rajkhowa, and the other men returned to Kapili. They crossed the Jamuna river and halted at Nabhang. Kaptan Gohain and the Basa Rajkhowa did not fight but waited there. In Bhado, they joined with the Deka Phukan. He was enraged with them. To this Kaptan Gohain replied, 'The Deka Phukan sent his envoy and called us back. Now why are you blaming us? Since you called us, we did not bother to enter the enemy villages and fight them, but decided to return.' 324

Later, the Mataks from the lower territory came to Demera and halted there. There they argued with the Kacharis and said, 'You Kacharis why don't you join with us and fight the enemy?' The two groups argued. The Mataks killed Dhajay Lashkar and two other Kacharis. The Kacharis fled from the village. Jatika Kachari and Natuwa Lashkar came to our camp. The Deka Phukan ordered that the fleeing Kacharis should be sent to Birah-Bebejiya. 325

In Bhahag or Dhinruk,[291] lakli Katkew[292] or 1726, the Deka Phukan asked the deodhai to consult the chicken legs and read the fate of our army. This was in preparation of a battle against the enemy. The deodhai predicted that our men will be victorious in war. Thereupon, the Deka Phukan ordered Kaptan Gohain and the Basa Rajkhowa to proceed with their army against the enemy group. This time, once again, they marched with the intention to fight. They halted on the bank of the Kapili river for sometime. Then they proceeded to the bank of the Kalang river. There they

291. The sixth month in a Tai-Ahom year which is equivalent to fifteenth April to fourteenth May of the Gregoriah calendar.
292. The thirty sixth lakli of a era.

built a fort and stayed for a long time. After a few days, they fought against the Mataks and the Kacharis. In that battle many Mataks and Kacharis were killed. Later the Deka Phukan, along with, Kaptan Gohain, the Basa Rajkhowa, Kan Bar Barua and others came to Jorhat and stayed there. In lakli Khuttyao and Rungplaw[293] or 1727-1729, there was peace in the kingdom. 326

In lakli Tawngi[294] or 1729, the Nagas from Barhat entered our kingdom and created a great deal of disorder. They plundered our villages. When the king and the Bura Gohain learnt about the destruction caused by the Nagas, they deputed Saru Abhayapuri Gogoi Rajkhowa to drive the Nagas away. After selecting an auspicious day, the army led by Saru Abhayapuri started for the Naga hills. They halted at Kathalbari and made their temporary fort there. The Nagas came out from the hills and attacked our army. A battle ensued. The Nagas retreated. Our men entered the Naga hills and destroyed many of their villages. Unable to safeguard their homes, the Nagas fled with their women and children to Kathanihabi. The Gogoi Rajkhowa captured a Naga and beheaded him. They hung his head from a tree. The Gogoi Rajkhowa returned with his men to Barhat. Later, three messengers were sent by a Naga chief to the Swargadeo with a variety of gifts. 327

In lakli Kama or 1730-31, Saring Raja, a relative of the Swargadeo, died. The last rites were performed and his ashes were taken to the Charaideo hills and buried there. Initially after ten days and later after a month more ceremonies were performed for the deceased. The king held an anniversary feast for his officers and gave presents of gold and silver to the brahmans and gonaks. Then Phiringi Deodhai performed dampuja and gave one chest of gold and one of silver to the ancestors so as to enable the deceased raja to make his journey to the land of his ancestors. 328

In lakli Kapchi or 1731-32, Nagas from Tirubalia took up arms against our men. They attacked the villagers and ransacked their homes. The Swargadeo deputed Jati Gharphaliya Bora with a few men to fight the Nagas. They marched to Daipatang hills. The Tirubalia Nagas attacked our men, but unable to defeat them, once again, fell upon the villagers and killed many of them. They carried

293. The thirty seventh and thirty eighth lakis of the era.
294. The thirty ninth lakli.

the heads of the slain victims to the mountains. In this way they attacked the villages for many days and killed many men. The army could not catch these Nagas. Then Saru Abhayapuri Gogoi Rajkhowa and his army came to fight the Nagas. They entered the mountain and built a fort. The Tirubalia Nagas asked the Sema Nagas to join them. The Raja of the Sema Nagas kept a watch on our army from his hideout in the mountains. One of our soldiers spied the Naga king. The soldier fired at the king and killed him. This angered the Nagas tremendously. They fell upon our villagers and killed many men, whom they sacrificed to their deceased chief.[295] Then Gogoi Rajkhowa led his men to fight the Nagas. The Tirubalia Nagas attacked our men, but could not win the tussle and fled. Our men pursued them, entered the Naga hills and set fire to their storehouses. The Nagas fled from their villages. After that Gogoi Rajkhowa and his army returned to their own fort. 329

In lakli Dapseu[296] or 1732-33, a small-pox epidemic broke out and many villagers died. Those days people stopped visiting each other. Suklingpha or Swargadeo Kamaleshwar Singha died from an attack of the virus. He ruled for fifteen years. 330

In that year, lakli Dapseu or 1732-33, sixth day of Bahag, his brother became the new Swargadeo. His Ahom name was Sudhingpha and his Hindu name was Chandrakanta Singha. The body of the deceased king was taken to Charaideo and buried there. His body was buried according to Ahom rites and custom. Buffalos and pigs were slaughtered and a feast was organized for the deodhais, bailungs and mohans. The Bura Gohain presented the brahmans and gonaks with gold and silver. The king also gave a feast to the three ministers, the Bar Barua, Phukan, Barua and to the other officers. Similarly gifts were given to the deodhai pandits, mohans and bailungs. To help the deceased in his journey to the land of the ancestors, dampuja was performed by Khargarhiya Deodhai Barua and Lekai Barua. The Swargadeo and the Bura Gohain went to Hensuwa and made merry. They fished, hunted and celebrated for many days. 331

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295. The motive behind head hunting in the tribal communities of Assam is to capture the soul substance of the victim and also send the victims as slaves to the next world (Gohain, *Human Sacrifice*).
296. The forty second lakli.

In lakli Mungmut[297] or 1734-35, the Bura Gohain gave orders to dig a pond at Hatigarh where a daul was also planned. In the center of the pond a nag was planted and the pond was consecrated. Brahmans and gonaks were given expensive gifts. The brahman women also were given gold jewelry. 332

In lakli Plekchan[298] or 1735-36, two Nara envoys, Mungklang Hingjipamung and Hingkak Phaki Phukan, and two other chiefs of the Singpho people came to our country. They sent two letters to Jorhat. The king and the Bura Gohain sent for Narayan Sauhing Phukan. They sent Kekang to Rangpur to welcome the Nara envoy and settle him in a temporary residence. He was asked to discuss on behalf of the king and the Bura Gohain. In this manner they received the envoys. The Nara envoy said, 'The people of Mantara have invaded our country and destroyed our land. Hence we have come to our brothers in Assam. Our country has been annexed to China. Our ministers and officers have consulted among themselves and have sent me to ask for help and assistance from our brother, the Ahom Swargadeo and his powerful minister the Bura Gohain. Please send armed forces to help us fight our enemies. If you give us some of your men we can protect our country.' Hearing this, the Bura Gohain replied, 'Very well, we will send our army in a few days.' With this reply he sent back the envoy with a variety of presents. The envoys were very happy. Later, a battalion of excellent soldiers were sent to the Nara kingdom. 333

Swargadeo Syaopha-Sudin appointed the son of the kukurasuwa pandit, Hatram, as the Saringiya Phukan. The king and Hatram used to sit together. The ministers, the Bura Gohain, the Bar Gohain and the Bar Patra Gohain had seen the king and Hatram sit together on many occasions which angered them and they said, 'We can bow our heads in front of the king. But we can't do so in front of a man who is no more than a soothsayer - a kukurasuwa. Although you have appointed Hatram as your Phukan, we desire that you should be seated in separate seats, alone.' But the king did not pay any attention to the request of his ministers. The three ministers decided that they will not visit the Swargadeo. 334

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297. The forty fourth lakli.
298. The forty fifth lakli.

In lakli Katraw or 1736-37, the Bura Gohain's son Dhekiyal Phukan married the Bar Phukan's daughter. In that year the king married the daughter of the Dihingia Mahanta and made her the chief queen. Later she was designated as the Parbatiya Konwari. The Bura Gohain had not given his consent to this marriage. 335

Later Hatram, the son of the kukurasuwa who was now the Saringiya Phukan, Budu's son, Mathan, Lebang Hatimuriya, his son, also Dulakakhariya Kel's Banji,[299] Lakhihari - these men plotted to take the Bura Gohain as their prisoner. The Bura Gohain heard of this and it made him very angry. The minister gave orders to seize the men who were plotting against him and to execute them. Some of these rebels were killed, some were put on the stake and the others were hunted down by the soldiers and killed. Rajmau seguested the king to hand Hatram to the ministers. The king made the ministers promise that they will not kill Hatram and after receiving their assurances handed him to them. He was not killed, but exiled to the Nara kingdom. After a few days, they asked the Nagas to kill Hatram and on his death plundered his house of its belongings. 336

In lakli Khutmi or 1737-38, the Kenduguria Bar Patra Gohain's son, Puwali Gohain, was appointed as the Bar-Patra Gohain. The Bura Gohain, in the meantime, had a disagreement with the Bar Phukan, and he asked his men to imprison the Bar Phukan. The Simaluguri Bar Phukan was warned by his daughter, who was married to the Bura Gohain's son, and the Bar Phukan fled to the kingdom of Bengal. The Bura Gohain then appointed Dihingia Na-Phukan as the Bar Phukan and deputed him to Guwahati. The Dihingia Rajkhowa pursued Badan Chandra Bar Phukan. The Bar Phukan crossed the Manas and from its bank shot at the Rajkhowa and killed him. The Ahoms accompanying the Bar Phukan cremated the body of the Rajkhowa. When the relatives became aware of this they brought back his ashes which they buried according to the Ahom custom and built a maidam .[300] 337

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299. The official gambler of the Dulakahariya community.
300. The origin of the word maidam is not known. However, it is believed to be a cognate of Mai+Dam which means 'the head devas place'. It was a royal burial site and a formality of Ahom aristocracy. Some sources interpret the word maidam as a corruption of Phidam or Spirit worship (Sarma, *Ahomor Bilupta Maidam Paranpara,* Guwahati: Leuit Press 1993).

The Bar Phukan reached Bengal. He told the Governor-General of his misfortune and problems and requested for his help. The Governor-General told him, 'We have good relations with the king of Assam. We cannot help you. You should go to the kingdom of Burma and seek the king's help.' 338

Thereafter, the Bar Phukan along with his son and Udaisingh accompanied by a Burman envoy followed the course of the Kin or Irrawady river to reach the kingdom of Burma. On reaching the kingdom of Burma, the Bar Phukan stayed with the king. After a few days, the king asked him the reason for his visit. He bowed before the king and said, 'The Bura Gohain has dethroned our king and has got rid of a number of officers of the kingdom. Since he is unable to administer the kingdom there are a lot of problems. He sent his men to catch and imprison me. I fled to Bengal. He sent an ambassador to Bengal to arrest me. I killed that man and escaped to your kingdom. I have come to you for shelter and protection. If you will depute a few of your soldiers to our country, our king, the ministers and the general people will be saved, and your dharma will be acknowledged all over the world.' 339

The Man king assured assistance. The old king was sick for nearly a month. In lakli Rungkew or 1738-39, the king's brother was appointed as the commander-in-chief or the king of the army. He was permitted to take the cannons and enough gun-powder from the storehouse. The Kali Kotoki, Mungklang Raja, Hukumi Raja, Megela Raja, and the Burman Phukan Barua - they assembled together. They took one lakh Man soldiers, nine thousand swords and a substantial amount of gun-powder and cannons, muskets and spears. They reached Kekuri-Namrup and made their outpost there. From there the Man king sent three letters to our king, 'We have heard that in our brother's kingdom there is no king any longer. We have sent Garbhesingh, Chaopha Suhitpung's son, to be king in this territory. Your Bar Phukan is with us. Send us some of your ambassadors with their identifications. If they are not the real sons of the king, but ministers under disguise we will kill them.' Kamini Phukan was appointed the ambassador and sent to meet the invaders. The Phukan halted at Meleng. The Mans marched to Ghiladhari with the intention to give battle. The Saru Abhayapuri Pat Gogoi captured some Man soldiers, who fought against him. In this battle Gogoi was routed. 340

In that year, the Bura Gohain died. He had ruled for thirty one years. His oldest son became the Bura Gohain. The king summoned the other ministers and the important officials and conferred with them. He said, 'The Mans have entered our kingdom. We have to decide whether we want to fight them or not.' The ministers and the officers decided that they should fight against the Man army. The Rubaigoyan Bura Gohain, Neogphukan, Naamdangiya Rajkhowa, Sungi Hazarika, Bakatiyal Na-Phukan, Kesukalia Bar Gohain's clansman - the Bar Gohain Dangariya-Handique Maju Abhayapuria, Bar Abhayapuria Rajkhowa, Lanmatharu Rajkhowa, Pani Abhayapuri Rajkhowa, Pat Haru Abhayapuria Rajkhowa, Bhim Sangrung Phukan, Lapi Gharphaliya Dadhara Bora, Handique Bilatiya Dadhara Bora, Dhenudharia Konwar Manjai Hazarika, Lukhurikhan Sungrung Hazarika, Phanising Sipadaar, Datalsingh, Bajupria, Gangaram, Minsingh, Miriksingh, along with these men the king sent seven companies of soldiers to fight the Man army. The commanding officers - the Hazarikas, Saïkias and Boras and the other men crossed the Dihing and made their fort there. The others proceeded to Kathalbari and halted near the silhaku. The Mans reached the banks of Sausing Phukan's pond. Some of our soldiers went to Charaideo and repaired the forts there. 341

Meantime, the Man king told the Bar Phukan, 'The king of Assam does not want to fight against us. If they wanted they would have fought against us by this time.' The officers and the soldiers decided that 'it will not be good if we do not fight. Our Swargadeo has sent us to fight, hence we have to.' At Kring-ra, the Pat Gogoi Rajkhowa made preparations for our men to fight against the Burmans. The Burman Phukan fell in the battle. The Man commander was enraged and he left for Railung. There the Man army surrounded our forces and instead of shooting their cannons, fought in an open battle. Our men wanted to fight but being outnumbered by the Mans retreated into their fort. The Bhadela Rajkhowa of Lanmakhuru assembled some soldiers together and asked them to fight. The next day, at the break of dawn the Mans enclosed our fort. Our men could not leave the fort to get supplies for their daily needs. The Kesukalia Bura Gohain fled very early in the morning. Then, the Man king and our Bar Phukan sent Udai

Singh as a messenger to the Swargadeo. He said, 'Our Man king does not wish to fight against you.' 342

Kubaigoyan Bura Gohain's son, Rusi Nath, was appointed the new Bura Gohain. In the mean time, the Mans entered our kingdom and pillaged the villages. Our army could not defeat them. The villagers began to flee. Purnananda Bura Gohain, who was the strength of the kingdom, died. There was no one to protect the population any longer. Rusi Nath advised the king to go to Guwahati. But the king refused to comply. 343

Since the king refused, fearing for his life and safety, Rusi Nath with his household entourage fled to Guwahati. Later, Badan Chandra Bar Phukan entered the capital and bowed before the king. The king conferred with Badan Phukan and was pleased with his courteous behaviour. In the mean while, the soldiers of the Bar Phukan plundered the Bura Gohain's house and gave off all the belongings to the Man commander. Syao-Sudhingpha appointed the Bar Phukan as the chief minister. From then on the Bar Phukan moved into the house of the Bura Gohain. He imprisoned the brothers of the Bura Gohain and inflicted a great deal of torture on them. The Parbatiya Phukan was blinded. The Mans went back to their own kingdom. Swargadeo Sudhingpha gifted Tungkhungiya Baga Gossain's daughter to the Man king. Dhani Bar Barua had an argument with the Bar Phukan, and he commissioned Subedar Rupsingh to kill him. In the month of Dhinkaw[301] or Bhado, Subedar Rupsingh killed the Bar Phukan. 344

At that time, Rusinath Bura Gohain was in Guwahati. His brother, Dhekiyal Phukan, invited Brajnath Gohain, Barmuria Gohain's son, to be the new king. The Bura Gohain, Deka Phukan, Dhekiyal Phukan and the other Hazarikas, Saikias and Boras were all present in this assembly. In lakli Tyaotyao[302] or 1739-40, the three ministers, the Bar Phukan, the Bar Barua and the other Phukans decided to install Brajanath's son, Purnandar Singha, to the throne instead of his father, who had blemishes and hence could not be the king. They then went to Jorhat by boat. In the meantime, Rusinath and his brother Dhekiyal Phukan blinded the former king Tyaosudingpha and de-throned him. Purnandar Singha ascended to

301. The ninth month in the Tai-Ahom calendar.
302. The forty ninth lakli.

the throne and took a royal name. After this event for a long while there were no more incidents of any significance. 345

Later, the Man king learnt that Chandra Kanta Singha was dethroned. He sent seven hundred soldiers under the command of Alungmingi to Assam. Alungmingi came and halted at Jaipur. Once again, he installed Chandra Kanta Singha on the throne. The officers who had revolted against Saupha-Sudin were taken prisoner. 346

The king appointed a Kachari named Patal as his Bar Barua. The Bar Barua built a good fort at Jaipur. A new Man army came to our kingdom. They came and killed Patal Bar Barua. The king thought, 'this time the Mans are not coming in friendship but in animosity'. The king sent for the Bura Gohain, the Bar Gohain, the Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan to fight against the Burmans. Syaopha-Sudingpha went to Guwahati and stayed there. The Man commander Mingimaha finding that the kingdom was without a ruler placed Jogeshwar Gohain, Tungkhungiya Baga Konwar's son, as the new king. Mingimaha Bandulai made plans to catch Syaopha-Suding. Chandrakanta Singha, along with the Saringiya Raja, the Bar Barua, Rajkhowa, Hazarika, Saikia, Bora, Subedar and a company of soldiers prepared a naval fleet to fight the Man. They halted at Ghiladhari. In the meantime, a new batch of soldiers arrived and reinforced the Man army. The Mans led by Mingimaha Bandula fought our army at Mahagarh. Unable to win this battle, Syaopha-Suding fled to a foreign country and stayed there. 347

The Mans began to plunder our villages. Most of the common people fled and took shelter in the Kathini forest. The Singphos joined the Mans and ransacked our kingdom. The Mans created havoc in the kingdom. They looted, plundered and gang raped our women. They did not spare the young nor the old. They made prisoners of us and looted our property. They stayed in the towns and ransacked everything and everyone. 348

Having won this victory and being able to occupy our kingdom, the Mans became very bold and they began to attack the territories under the Company administration. When the Governor-General learnt of the Man atrocity, he decided to fight them. Scot, was given command of the Company soldiers and they arrived at Mahagarh where they made their fort. Next day he left for

Jorhat. In the meantime, Colonel Richard arrived in Nowgong. The Mans retreated and halted in their fort at Jorhat. The English platoon arrived at Jorhat. The Mans burnt the houses inside their fort at Jorhat and left for Rangpur.

Colonel Richard proceeded to Gaurisagar where he made his temporary post. The Mans attacked the soldiers of Colonel Richard, who killed them in great number. Scot, the other English commander, sent his soldiers to Rangpur to fight the Mans. There was a fierce battle in which the Mans were utterly devastated. Unable to fight any longer they fled eastward. The Senpati Phukan and the English commander signed a treaty. From then on the English ruled this kingdom for a long time. 349

In lakli Mungmaw or 1755, Purnandar Singha, the son of Brajnath Gohain, started to make fresh attempts to regain the kingdom for himself. For this reason, Mister White installed him as the king. After becoming king he consulted with the Handique Ghinay Rajkhowa and Lambudhar Phukan to move to Mahagarh. Later he moved to Jorhat and stayed there. The king decided to build a fort and a royal palace. 350

The king appointed Madhram Dihingia Phukan, the Bar Gohain's son as the new Bar Gohain. Kenduguri Bar Patra Gohain's son became the Bar Patra Gohain, Kobaigoyan Bura Gohain's son became the Bura Gohain. One Kanu Bula was appointed as the Dihingia Phukan. Patar Naramai Gogoi Rajkhowa was appointed as the Bhatiyaliya Deka Phukan. Kobaigoyan Bura Gohain's grandson, Telishar Ijan, was appointed as the Deka Phukan. Sapaguri Barbarua's relative, Radhanath, was appointed as the Bar Barua. Another relative of the Bura Gohain, Kesuwapuwali, was appointed as the Basa Rajkhowa. A relative of the Kakati, Moniram, was appointed as the Serishtadar. A brahman was appointed as the Tamuli Phukan. A gonak was appointed as the Parbatiya Phukan. And Manjur Hilaidhari Konwar's son, Bhayanadak, was appointed as the Neog Phukan. A new group of Hazarika, Saikias and Boras were also appointed. One Saraimariya was appointed as the Raidangiya Barua. One Saringia was appointed as the Deodhai Phukan. Akhoykhowa Mesaghariya was appointed as a Barua. A relative of the kukurasuwa, Hukura Sengdhuwa, was appointed as a Phukan. One of the Naras was

appointed as a Bailung Phukan and another as Bar Bailung Barua. The king called his commanders - the Hazarikas and Saikias - and with their permission took away a few of their men from their command and distributed them among Chatrangsingh and Rupsingh. 351

The Malauthupiya Nagas attacked the kingdom and plundered the villages. After discussing with his three ministers, the king sent Chatrangsingh Subedar with Hilaidhari Bhayanad Neog and some Hazarikas, Saikias and Boras to fight the Nagas. They went to fight the Nagas and built their fort at Dupgarh. The Neog Phukan called upon a Naga envoy and told him, 'Go to the hills where the Malauthupiya Nagas live and ask them to come to me.' The envoy named Kasu went to the Nagas and asked them to come to our camp. Some of them came down from the mountain. The Neog Phukan captured them immediately and put them in chains. On twenty seventh Phagun of Dhinsi, the Nagas came out of the mountains at the dead of night and killed many of our soldiers. The Neog Phukan fled. The Rangpuriya soldiers shot at the Nagas and killed many of them. The Nagas, too, fled back to the mountains. When the king and the ministers heard this they sent for the Neog Phukan and the soldiers. In Jeth, lakli Taosang or 1759-60, the Barduwariya Nagas and the Barhatiya Namsengiya Nagas fought among themselves and killed many. Gogoi Khunbau died in the battle and Namsengiya Lathung Deka fled away. When the king and the ministers heard this, they asked that the Khunbao Nagas should be caught and brought to them. The Khunbaos were arrested. Hidu Khunbao was put in chains. 352

In Haun or Dhinkaw, the king arranged for the marriage of his son, Saring Raja, to the Sapaguri Barbarua's daughter. The bride and the groom were bathed in tumeric paste. The royal marriage was celebrated for many days. Drums, flutes, trumpets were sounded. On Sunday, the marriage was performed. The Hindus were fed curd and jaggery. 353

In Aghun or Dhinsi, lakli Karaw or 1760, the king having consulted with his officers decided to fight the Nagas. The king took all his officers and also Tengesi Naga Khunbau.

He crossed the Naga villages of Asiringiya, Helaju, Lakhutigoyan and reached the village of Maluthapiya. There they

fought a fierce battle. The Nagas were unable to fight for long and had to retreat. Their wives and children fled to the mountains and took shelter in the thick forests. In Dinchi or Phagun, on Ahom Kapsinga, Hindu Wednesday, the king decided to build a Hulung ghar at Rangpur. He laid the initial foundation of this chamber. 354

In lakli Karaw or 1760, Mister Jenkins and Mister White came to Mahagarh. The king's son, Saring Raja, gave them chira[303] and milk for the mid-day meal. Mister White did not eat. He was very angry when he entered Jorhat. On Tuesday in Kati or Dinchipchang, Mister White removed the reigning king Purnandar Singha from the throne. From that time Assam became a province of the British. 355

303. Puffed rice.

Chronicle VII

The Officers of the Ahom Administration

Sri Krishnaye namu namah. The arrangement of the officers in the Ahom administration. The Bura Gohain, the Bar Gohain, and the Bar Patra Gohain - these three are of the same status. They get a Kekuradula,[304] an aruwan of plain cloth and the handle is covered with a gamucha. Additionally, he is allowed a golden covering on his panijapi,[305] a tupijapi,[306] two feathered fans, one with a rotating handle, and an embroidered cushion or seat. His wives do not get any of these except a japi with a fine gold attachment. Like the three Gohains, so are the Sadiya Khowa Gohain, Halal Gohain and Marangiya Gohain. These three Gohains are known as Datiyaliya Gohains.[307] These three positions are slightly lower in rank. 357

The Bar Barua and Bar Phukan are both of the same rank. But since Guwahati is far from the capital, Garhgaon, their power is slightly more than others. Each receives a big japi made of kuhi grass,[308] a silver covering on their panijapi, sometimes a gold covering is also allowed, a straw fan, a tupijapi, a long handled rotating fan, a salkath seat, and a stick encased in silver. The Phukan of the Sar areas[309] or the three ministers mentioned earlier, one of whom is the chief minister, gets a thousand Jakaisukia.[310] 357

The Nibukiyal Rajkhowa and the Basa Rajkhows are of the same rank. Each gets a seat with iron claws called a luhasangi. The

304. A sedan chair.
305. A large rain hat.
306. A small hat.
307. The governors of the border areas.
308. Fine grass noted for its medicinal value.
309. Highland formed by the silting of a river.
310. A khel of parks.

two Dihingia Rajkhowas, two Tar-Halgurias, two Rajkhowas of Upar-Halguria, the two Abhayapur Rajkhowas (Bar and Saru), Upar Daiyangia, Maju Daiyangia, Pani Daiyangia Rajkhowa, Dikhoumukhia Rajkhowa, Gajpuria Rajkhowa, Ghiladhatiya Rajkhowa - these fourteen are of the same rank. In Guwahati, they get a fine parhisangi, a fine seat, like a palanquin. The Garhgaonyan and Rangpuria, these two are the Chetia Patra Baruas, the two Gharphaliya Baruas, the four Sangrang Baruas - these eight officers are of the same rank. They are Bajuwa officers.[311] 358

The Naobaisa Phukan, Pani Phukan Bhitoruwal Phukan, the two Deka Phukans, the two Dhingia Phukans, Na Phukan and Cheita Phukan - these nine are of the same status, but they get a plain japi. The Niyay Huda Phukan, Neog Phukan, Sangrung Phukan - these three are same, too. They are similar to the other nine officers. The Chuladhara Phukan, Kharghariya Phukan, Dhekiyal Phukan, Nauhaliya Phukan, Tamuli Phukan - these five are of the same ranking. They get a silver covering on their panijapi, tupijapi, a parhisangi seat, a feathered fan, a long handled rotating fan, a stick encased in silver and a salkath sangi. If they do not get a straw hat and fan, the officers, namely the Chuladhara, Kharghariya, and Dhekiyal Phukan, receive a parhisangi seat. The Nauhaliya Phukan and Tamuli Phukan get a sangi with supports at the base. The Siring-Phukan, Kathbarua and Hulpani Barua - these three are of the same rank. A panijapi with a silver covering, an encased stick, a long handled fan and a parhisangi seat are given to them. The Jalbhari Phukan, Gandhiya Barua, Majumdar Barua, Khanikar Barua and Hensuwa Barua - these five are the same. They get a sangi with supports. If the king's sons-in-law do not get an office they get a silver garment, a parhisangi and are considered of the same position as a Samuwa Phukan or Barbandar Barua. 359

The Changmai Barua, Tipamiya Rajkhowa, Hati Barua, Ghorabarua and Kukurasuwa Barua - these five are of the same status. The two Dulakakhariya Baruas, the two Saudang Baruas, Jaradhara Barua and Bejbarua - these six are of the same ranking. The three Duliya Barua, Darbadhar Barua, Kathkatiya Barua, Maliya Barua, Ghee Barua amd Pakhimariya Barua - these eight are the same. The Gajpuriya Barua, Hilakuti Barua, Saraimariya Barua,

311. The ancillary officers.

Dhenususa Barua, Jutakiya Barua and Dubari Barua - these six are the same. They are the officers dealing with the internal management. The Raidangiya Phukan, Parbatiya Phukan, Khangiya Phukan, Saringiya Phukan and Tipamiya Phukan - these five are the same. They get a Sangi which have supports on the base. The Raidangiya Barua, Parbatiya Barua, Khangiya Barua, Saringiya Barua and Tipamiya Barua - these five are the same. The Namrupiya Barua, Purani Melar Barua, Majumelar Barua, Sorumelar Barua, Mahimelar Barua, Na-Melar Barua, Gabhorumelar Barua, Kaliseng Barua and Anaighariya Barua - these nine are of the same rank. They are responsible for arranging assemblies to discuss internal problems and the matters of home administration. The Devaliya Baruas are referred to in the Sadar as the managers of temples. 360

When the three ministers visit the town a tenant announces their visit and a fife player sounds his fife. Men carrying red spears ride on horses or elephants. The ministers wear anklets on their feet and ride their horses seated on a yellow cushion, also they use a special seat if they ride their elephants, and the palanquin bearers march ahead of the entourage. Once they enter the capital complex the announcer and the fife player have to stop their activities immediately. 361

Enroute, if the ministers meet the Swargadeo riding on his elephant they have to salute him from their seat on the elephant. If the king rides a horse and his ministers see him, they have to rise from their cushioned seats and greet him. Rajmaudeo, the chief queen, and the Parbatiya konwari receive the same courtesy like that of the king. The ministers bow before the king when they enter the Singorigarh. If the king meets the other Datiyali Gohains, they have to follow the same courtesy. If the Tipamiya, Saringiya and Melkara Gohains meet the three ministers, they have to make way for the ministers. If the Datiyali Gohains meet the three ministers, they have to make way for them like the other Gohains do. If the Datiyali Gohains meet the Melkhowa Gohains they have to greet each other and politely pass by each other. If the king's own son or a relative is a Melkhowa Gohain, everyone is very polite to him.

The Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan - if they meet the three ministers they have to alight from their dulas and greet them. The Sara Phukans and the Phukans, in case they see the three ministers

when they come down from their changi houses, have to hide from the sight of the ministers. The three ministers have to leave their dulas at the Barduwar,[312] their aruwan, spears and other arms should be left at the door. They have to enter the city with a few men carrying the red spears and holding the fine gold panijapi. Even if there is a storm or heavy rain they cannot carry anything or enter the royal quarters in any other way. 362

When the ministers enter the doorway, the Bar Baruas who take care of the paper work for the Sara Phukans in the capital city, if they are seated on the east side of the room they have to get up and go into the western rooms. When they sit down they have to remove the triangular stool, instead they sit on a cloth which is spread out for them. The ministers first wash their feet and after wiping them with a nice piece of cloth, they sit on an embroidered cushion. A bowl is placed in front in case they need to spit into it.

The Bar Barua is designated by the Sara Phukans as their leader in case they need to approach the minister. In that case, they sit on the edge of the mat or if the distance is large the Phukan spreads a cloth on two planks of wood and sits on it. The Samuwa Phukans sit on the edge of the wooden plank. The Bura Gohain and the Bar Patra sit at the centre of the room and the rows of Sara Phukans who are in the western room sit on the western side. They do not get any cushion or cloth to sit on. If the ministers have already taken their seat, the Sara Phukans have to pass by the Bar Barua, wash their feet, and walk down kneeling to the western side of the assembly room.

The ministers come to town only when the Swargadeo sends for them with a message through his envoy. Royal officers, Baruas, Phukans and others are not allowed to visit the minister' house without prior permission from the king. When the king dismisses his ministers, the Tamuli sends a tray of betelnuts. When the ministers are presented hengdans they have to receive it with courtesy and leave immediately. If the ministers desire to visit the inner chamber of the Barghar, a Bar Barua has to announce them. The ministers follow him. They wash their feet before ascending the ladder to the upper floor. The Khatoniyar fans them, the Tamuli

312. The main door to the Singorighar.

carries a packet of betelnuts, and the Tekela Bora carries the uncushioned seat to the inner chamber on which the ministers sit. Here the king and the ministers have their discussion and in this gathering the three Bhandar Baruas sit on the northern edge of the eastern wall. Others of similar rank and status are also allowed to sit in this way. The Sara Phukans sit in a row on the eastern side, south of the Bhandar Barua, from north to south. The Samuwa Phukans sit on the western end of the room, in a north-south direction, but if they sit facing the king then they are in a east-west direction. The oja servant[313] and the domestic servants of the king sit beneath the western roof. Some male servants remain near the western edge of the king's seat. They should not sit on the south end or outside the chamber. This is the rule which officers follow when seated in the Barghar . 363

If a big assembly is held in the Barghar, the king comes out first and sits on his cushion. One Samuwa Phukan calls the oja servant to announce the assembly. This is conveyed to the Kukurasuwa Bora. The Bora relays it to the Barbat Kukurasuwa Barua and the Pasani Bora. They remove the curtain from the main chamber. The men-in-charge of the betelnuts arrange them on a cloth, and carry the fan and spittoon to the king. During this time the personal attendants of the king cannot be beside him, only the attendant serving the betelnut to the king should be there crouched before him. The ojaligira and the Kukurasuwa Barua sit there. On the southern edge of the western wall there is a covering. There the head barber sits along with two or three more barbers. The Kukurasuwa Barua announces the assembly to the leader of the Sara Phukans. When they take their seats, the Majumdar Barua escorts the ministers from the outer room. When the ministers are seated, the assembly begins. When the ministers walk toward the inner chamber no one should walk with them. Their spittoon, fans and cushions should be already put in the chamber. The Kukurasuwa or a royal attendant spreads out a cloth on their cushion. When the Bar Barua leaves his home two rows of Tangandhara[314] men escort him. In front they carry the silver panijapi, tupijapi, a straw fan, and a silver encased walking stick. After they enter the barduwar they hold the barjapi from behind,

313. The principal servant.
314. A group of guardsmen.

like an umbrella. The minister enters the outer room, sits on the designated seat, washes his feet, and sits on the triangular seat with the cloth spread out on it. A leaf with some sand is placed before him to spit on. In this way, the Sara Phukans sit in their designated places. But they do not have tangandhara and their barjapi is not ornamented. They should not take these into the town. Inside the town only the Bar Barua wears his barjapi. The other Baruas and Phukans cannot wear their japis. 364

When the Bar Barua and the Sara Phukans ascend to the upper platform of the chang, they wash their feet holding the upper post, tuck their betelnuts and leaves inside their garment and enter the chamber holding a fan on their right hand. When the Bar Barua proceeds to the main chamber, in case the three Datiliya Gohains meet him on the way, he does not have to alight from his dula. Likewise, the Sara Phukans do not have to get off from their dulas. But if a Melkhowa Gohain is a prince or relative of the king, the three Gohains, the Bar Barua and the Phukans have to show more courtesy. If the Bar Phukan and the Bar Barua meet a Samuwa Phukan who carries a straw fan, the Samuwa Phukan has to retreat to a side alley and hide underneath his barjapi. The Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan should not see the Samuwa Phukans on their dulas. If the Samuwa Phukans meet the Sara Phukans, they have to let them pass first. If the three Datiyali Gohains or the Melkhowa Gohains meet the Samuwa Phukans, the Phukans have to get off from their duals and the bearers should veil the dula. If this happens to a Bar Bhandar Barua, he should alight from the dula, hide it and pay respect to the Bar Barua. Likewise, he has to do in case he meets the Datiyali Gohain or Melkhowa Gohains. In case he meets a Sara Phukan he should veil the dula and make way for him to pass. When the Samuwa Phukans come out of their homes they bring with them the silver panijapi, the tupijapi, straw fan, the long handled rotating fan and the silver encased walking stick. They wash their feet beside the western pillar and enter the room. They also hang their panijapi on that wall. On the way, if they meet the Bar Bhandar Barua, the Barua has to make way for the Samuwa Barua to pass. If the Itar Phukan Barua meets the other Baruas, he has to veil himself and let them pass. If the Itar Phukan meets the Bar Bhandar Baruas, he has to move to one side and let them pass. If the Samuwa Phukans travel by road and the weather is bad, for

instance there is a heavy downpour or bright sunshine, the barjapi is held up for them. If the three Bar Bhandar Baruas or another Barua, like the Dhekiyal, Chuladhara, or Kharghariya Barua, travel by road to the capital they are allowed to use the barjapi. But this is not permitted all the time. Besides them, none else, even if they come by road to the capital, should have the barjapi over them. 365

The Bhandar Baruas get a rotating fan and an encased walking stick. They wash their feet near the Darika duwar and enter inside. The three ministers, the Bar Barua, Bar Phukan and other Sara Phukans and the Samuwa Phukans enter and exit the inner chamber of the barghar through the western doorway. The other Bar Bhandar Baruas, and other Phukans and Baruas enter and exit through the eastern side. If the Samuwa Phukans have to approach the Bar Barua in the outer room they sit on the edge of the triangular seat. When the Bar Barua visits Panisuwa, the Samuwa Phukan gets a mat to sit on. The other Phukans and Baruas have to sit in a kneeling position.

The Bar Bhandar Barua can take a silver parhisangi seat. For this he does not have to ask permission. But to get gold bangles, or a small gold box,[315] he has to first receive permission. The Chuladhara Barua, Kharghariya and Dhekiyal Baruas are in the same position as the Bar Bhandar Barua. Other than the three ministers or the king's sons-in-law, the Nauhaliya Phukan and the Tamuli Phukan can have a silver garment without taking permission. For all other articles they have to first get permission. So also to get a straw fan. The other lesser officers have to get permission even for a silver dress. 366

Samuwa Phukan and the Bar Bhandar Phukan are of the same rank. Some officers before they enter the inner chamber, wash their feet beside the western pillar. In the outer room where generally the king sits, on the southern side leaving aside one room, beneath it on the east side, the three ministers sit in a row. They spit on the plain ground in front of them. The Sadiya Khowa Gohain, Marangikhowa Gohain and Halal Gohain sit beside the Bar Gohain. Sometimes there is a slight change in this arrangement. At times the three ministers sit on the three pillars from the east to the south. Then

315. A box to keep betelnuts. It is a mark of nobility.

the Bar Barua, Phukan and Rajkhowa, etc., sit from the western side progressively moving toward the southern pillar. The ministers sit beside the pillar which is not designated for the king. If the ministers sit lengthwise then they begin on the western pillar and move to the southern one and so too the other officers. Besides them the deodhai, bailung, Chetiapatra Barua, and the Gharphaliya Baruas sit there. The assembly in the southern side of the outer room is convened by the Bar Barua and is called into motion by the Neog Phukan.

The room next to the king is left empty, but his personal attendants sit close to it. In the northern room facing the empty room, a few attendants of the royal officers sit there. Strict rules have to be followed by those who come as attendants on this occasion. In one of the rooms, the royal dula is kept ready for use. On the eastern room the betelnut bearers sit with their tray of betelnuts. To the south of this room, on the northern side, the hengdan bearers and on the south side, the pandits taking notes of the assembly are seated. South of this room the various ambassadors and messengers are seated. In the southern end of the room, the hatimurias of the ministers take their seat. 367

When the king is in the capital the outer room should never be left empty. The Bar Barua and Sara Phukan should sit in the room. When the king is out of the capital, or goes on trips outside, even then the outer room should never be left empty. During this time, the Nyayhuda Phukan sits there. Until, the king comes back to town the duties of the Bar Barua are performed by the Nyayhuda Phukan. The Bar Barua always sits beside the pillar which generally the Bar Patra Gohain uses. Every morning the Bar Barua has to sit there. In the afternoon he goes for rest. At three danta beli, he returns to the outer room. He leaves his place of work at evening time. The Neog Boras work with the Bar Barua. They kneel in front of him and inform him of the various events. At night the Bar Barua stays in Panisuwa. He does not have to work in the evenings. Early morning he goes to the royal palace where he eats his meal and then enters the outer chamber for work. The Sara Phukans take care of the room at night and so do the Rajkhowas.

No one should take a mat or loft to sleep inside the capital complex. They can make a mud plinth or a wooden platform spread with leaves to sleep on. They should not have a musquito net, or

sandals. They can sleep on the cloth which is used as a spread for the king and ministers to walk on. They should not take any metallic basin or spittoon, but can have one made of wood. They should not use a bowl or plate inside the capital compound. They should use copper plates and bowls here. The Bar Barua is to keep himself aware of of what is going on inside. Therefore the Bar Barua has to be there everyday. The Dhekiyal Barua is in charge of finding out the details and deciding the cases inside the capital complex. He has to be there everyday, too.

On the south side of the Bar Barua, the Naobaisa Phukan has his seat. On the northern side of the southern pillar, Deka Phukan sits there and on the south, Dihingia Phukan has his seat. West of the Bar Barua, the Na-Phukan has his seat. On the northern pillar the Bhitoruwal Phukan has his seat. South of the Na-Phukan, Neog Phukan sits there. But none of them can sit inside the area of the main pillar. The big pillar is the boundary. They sit inside in a row when there is an assembly. In the south-east section, the Sangrang Phukan has his seat. South of him is the Nyayhuda Phukan. When the Phukans and Rajkhowas come from Guwahati to the capital a plank is laid out on the south side of the Gharialdhara pillar, where they can sit. The Paniphukan and the other Phukans, according to their position, take their seat with the Phukans. When the king and queen of Darrang visit our court, they sit on the eastern pillar, south of the Datiyali Gohains. Everyday, after the Bar Barua takes his seat in the outer chamber, the Sarisatriyar Khatoniyar and the pandits of the assembly enter through the north side, take their seats on the eastern side and discuss the various matters. The Barkakati also sits there and inquires into the messages. 368

The king decides the nature of punishment for any crime. There are no fixed rules for this. The ministers are allowed to whip the criminals to death, or they can drown them by attaching a heavy article. But they do not kill them with any weapons. They blind them, cut off their noses and ears, and pound the knee of the offender. The Bar Barua also punishes in a similar manner. But those officers who hold important positions, when they are found guilty of crime the king has to be first informed of their punishment. Since the Bar Phukan is posted away from the capital, the power of the Bar Barua in this matter is a little more. The Sara Phukan cannot order for the cutting of ears and noses of the

offenders. They can beat, slap, or whip the criminal. The Samuwa Phukans who carry straw fans, Baruas, and the Meldharia Phukans can inflict similar punishments. They can whip, beat, slap and imprison the men from the two khels - the Bhitoruwal and Tekela Dulias. The Bar Phukan has the power to inflict the same kind of punishments as the ministers. But a thief can be cut with a weapon. In upper Assam, the Saudangs killed these offenders, and in lower Assam, the Buruks do that task. 369

In the royal palace the wives of the ministers are referred to as the wife of so-and-so minister. The wives of the Bar Barua and the Bar Phukan are referred to as so-and-so Barphukanani or Barbaruani. But the rules for the Sara Phukans, wives are different. When the wives of the ministers enter the capital complex, to avoid the blazing sun or rain, they wear a hiyajapi.[316] They enter through the upper Saudang door and sit in the outer room of the Saudang quarters. One of their attendants can spread a banana leaf for the ministers wife to sit on. When they visit the princess they sit on a banana leaf. The wives of the Bar Baura, Bar Phukan and the Sara Phukan - they do the same as the wives of the ministers. They enter the palace through the door of the Saudang quarters and sit there. However, their banana leaves can have only one fold and is placed a little lower than that of the ministers' wives. When the wives of the Samuwa Phukan with straw fans or the wives of the Baruas come to the capital, they follow the same norm. They sit on a little lower seat than the wives of the Sara Phukan. The same is followed during their visits to the princess' quarters. The others, the wives of the Phukan and the Baruas, do not get leaves to sit on. They sit on the ground.

The Upper Saudang doors are known as Kalugoyan duwar, Ligiri duwar and Matighar duwar. The lower Saudang doors are called Kamalabari duwar and Gossainghar duwar. The door where the dulas are kept is called Dairka duwar. The eastern door is called Pani duwar, the southern one Bar duwar, and the western as Naduwar. There are no doors on the northern side. The house behind is called Kareng. The hiyajapi is beautifully embroidered with various coloured threads and gold and silver motifs with pearls. Such golden dresses and hiyajapis are given to the wives of

316. A small hat.

the ministers, the Bar Baura, Bar Phukan, Sara Phukan and Samuwa Phukan. The wives of the important ministers get better embroidered dresses. The wives of the Sara Phukan have less embroidery on their dress. Likewise, the wives of the lesser Baruas and Phukans. They have a thinner motif and sometimes have only silver attachments. 370

When a new minister is appointed the announcement is made from the Ghariyal dhara pillar in the outer room or from beside it. A cloth is spread out for the minister to sit on. The others sit in a kneeling position. Here all the announcements are made and when it is complete they say a prayer for the king. After that they enter the room and sit in their designated places. Some of them go to the palace from there. If there is a dula they take that to the palace, otherwise, they ride a horse from the royal stable. The same tradition is followed when the Datiyali Gohains are appointed. In case of an appointment of a Bar Barua or Bar Phukan, first a general oath is read and then a straw seat is arranged near the pillar, where the Bar Barua sits in the outer room. The Swargadeo's order is read for all. The others sit in a kneeling position. The same custom is followed like before.

In the same way, the appointment of Sara Phukans are read out. In case a new minister is appointed while the other minister is still alive, a messenger visits the house of the outgoing minister and reads the Swargadeo's orders to him. Then he takes back the aruwan and dula which came with the office. Except for the three ministers, all the other appointments of the Sara Phukans can be made only when the Bar Barua is seated in his place in the outer room. The newly appointed Baruas and Phukans should not be present at that time. But other Baruas and Phukans should be present to hear the appointment order. When a Rajkhowa is appointed the announcement is made in the southern side of the room and before the declaration the Bar Barua should be informed of the order. The Chetiapatra Barua and Gharphaliya Barua are announced in the western side. So too the appointment of the Sangrung Barua. The Samuwa Phukans are announced in the northern side. This also has to be informed to the Bar Barua before the general announcement. The other Baruas, like, Tipamiya Rajkhowa, Hatibarua, Ghorabarua, etc, are announced in front of the Dulakakhariya duwar. The Saudang Baruas are announced from

the Saudang chamber. In this regulated manner the other officers like Kukurasuwa Barua, Pasani Bora, Bar Tamuli, etc, are appointed. On the eastern side, on the side of the Changmai changs, the Changmai Barua is announced and also the Jaradhara Barua and the Bejbarua. The three Duliya Baruas are appointed by the Swargadeo in the dulaghar.

The Meldharia Phukans were announced from the Darika duwar. The Devaliya Baruas are announced near this door. There the Hazarikas are also announced. The Meldharia Tekelar Barua, Neog Barua - these men are announced by the Lekharu Kukurasuwa Bora by permission of the chief princess or the Gohain. The Kukurasuwa Neog is appointed along with his attendants by the Swargadeo. The Saikias and Boras of the Saudang are announced in the Saudang chamber. Dulakahariya Bora, Barneog Dhekiyal Barua are announced in the room where they sit to meet with their attendants. 371

PART II

Tale Telling in the Lauhitya Valley

The history of Assam, more so, the history of Lauhitya valley is a history of 'crossroads'. Hemmed in between the eastern Himalayas, Tibet, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh, the hills and valleys of Assam have been a highway of contact and communication between peoples, ideas, cultures and societies of South, South-East and Inner Asia.[317] The boundaries delineating this realm have been expressed in human rather than political and geographic terms. Neither have the margins of demarcation been fixed at any time level. The physical resemblance of the people of Lauhitya valley with the peoples of South-East Asia are striking. The cultural and religious linkages with Tibet have caused one to

317. For details see M. Aries, 'Notes on the History of the Mon-yul Corridor', in *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson*, ed. M. Aries & Aung San Suu Kyi (Warminster: Aries & Phillips, Ltd., 1980), pp. 9-20; Huntington and Huntington, *Leaves of a Bodhi Tree* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); N.N. Acharyya, 'The Trade-Routes and Means of Transport in Eastern India in Ancient Times', *Journal of the University of Guwahati*, vol. xxi-xxiii, no. i, Arts (Guwahati, 1970-1972), pp. 132-141; S.M.K. Subhani, 'A Study in the Trans-Himalayan Trade through North East India', *The Journal of the Assam Research Society*, vol. xvii (Guwahati: Kamarupa Anushandhan Samiti, 1963), pp. 39-46; J. Deyell, 'The China Connection: Problems of Silver Supply in Medieval Bengal', in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, ed. J.F. Richards (Durhan, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1983), pp. 207-365; D.P. Choudhury, 'British Quest for Trade Routes from Assam to Eastern Tibet, 1771-1914', *Asian Affairs*, pp. 180-184; Commander Griffith, 'Journal of a Visit to the Mishmee Hills in Assam', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. vi (Calcutta: 1937), pp. 325-341; L.W. Shakespear, *History of Upper Assam, Upper Burmah and North-Eastern Frontier* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1914); J. M'Cosh, *Topography of Assam*, reprint (Delhi: Sanskaran Prakashak, 1975); T.T. Cooper, *New Routes of Commerce: The Mishmee Hills* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1873); W. Robinson, *Descriptive Account of Assam with a Sketch of the Local Geography and a Concise History of the Teaplant of Assam to which is added a Short Account of the Neighbouring Tribes* (London: Thomas Ostell & Co., 1841); M. Martin, *The History, Antiquities, Topography, and Statistics of Eastern India*, vol. 5: *Rangpur and Assam*, reprint (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1976); W. Griffith, *Journals of Travels in Assam, Burma, Bhootan, Afghanistan and the Neighbouring Countries*, reprint (Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Co., 1971).

wonder about a southward migration of peoples to the upper central Lauhitya valley. The Assamese language and speech have been enriched through contacts with Burmese and Tai linguistic groups. The peoples of Assam have assimilated 'borrowed' products to include Indic customs in dress, food, housing, social norms, while maintaining a substratum, indigenous Assamese culture. In as much the boundaries at the Assamese 'crossroads' have never been precise or stable.

Periodically Assam has been attached to Islamic and Indic influences through political subjugation to the ruling power in Bengal. However, in the thirteenth century a significant land venture was made from the westward passes by a group of Tai-Shans, who became known as 'Ahoms' in the Lauhitya valley. A continuous land bridge between the Indic realms and South-East Asia became possible. The convergence of the peoples, cultures and customs of social organization are narrated in extensive details in the *buranji* literature. The early narratives were written in a script of Burmese derivation. However, in around the seventeenth century, Assamese became the link language between the various communities residing in the valley.

I have attempted in this research to make a preliminary study of the two salient processes at work in the Lauhitya valley between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries. The first of these mentioned earlier was related to the geographical location of Assam at the margins of major polities and cultures - Indic and South-East, along with Inner Asian; Brahmanist and Buddhistic belief systems. The second, the emergence of a pluralistic society and polity at the intersection was a product of the 'coming together' of various ideas and institutions which manifested in the 'becoming' of an 'Ahom' identity. For this, the movement of brahmans and brahmanism eastward from Bengal and beyond played a determining role in shaping multiplex images of the Tai-Ahoms in the succeeding periods. At once we find that the Tai-Ahom royalty was brahmanised and legitimised as the 'Khastriyas of the East' and the kingdom of Assam was mapped within the sacred geography of 'Hindusim'.[318] As well, the 'tribalised, animistic' peoples of the

318. For details, see A.C. Agarwala, *Ancient Assam* (Dibrugarh: Assamiya Press, 1921).

valley politically coalesced together providing substantial opposition to the Muslim imperialistic designs to the east. As streams of the peoples from the west, that is Hindustan, migrated eastward a new name was given to the crossroads region. It became Assam.[319] The exposure to the western influences and peoples generated in developing new ideas within. Social memory was re-formed and new stories of the Assamese peoples evolved, some of them borrowing heavily from the Indic peoples and cultures, while the earlier connections with South-East and Inner Asia were relegated to the background.

The conclusion of this study is, however, tentative and is open to revision as more archival research is undertaken combining the Ahom *buranjis* with other textual evidence such as the *Vamsavali kathas* of the various religio-political communities. Also extensive field work in the Tai villages in upper Assam is likely to bring to our notice new evidences which will generate a fresh understanding of the history of the 'crossroads'.

Crafting a beginning: the myths of origin

The essential elements of the Tai-Ahom myths were derived from a variety of sources. They were taken from Hindu, Buddhist and indigenous belief systems prevalent in South, South-East and Inner Asia and even China. The peoples at the 'crossroads' share an internal perception that links them to a common cultural background, the Tai-Ahom narative account is one of the expressions of the shared culture. Origin myths provide the contemporary Tai-Ahoms with a sense of beginning. The present was impregnated in the past being conceived long before humans were sent to inhabit the earth. The dynamic element creating history are the extra-terrestrial beings called gods, who descend to human level to act out the structure of this plan. The later Tai-Ahom selves can be situated as the result of divine intervention. In social communication narrating the birth of an 'Ahom' history, the Divine is represented as a deity of the Hindu pantheon, Indra, or is

319. Some scholars are of the opinion that Assam is a Sanskrit term meaning 'uneven' or 'undulating'.

referred to simply as the Being.[320] In orchestrating the recollections of origin, the Tai-Ahoms integrated a variety of religious and traditional beliefs of South, South-East, and Inner Asia. The invocation of Hindu deities in the creative action of the Tai-Ahoms defintely was a later development, occuring after their settlement and expansion in the Lauhitya valley.

According to the origin myth in the first chronicle, humankind began in the Satya Yuga. It emerged from a gourd created by the Divine Brahma.[321] For a while, all men lived together as one big family. In the next movement of the cycle, in the Trata Yuga, however, discord and discontent became widespread and Lord Indra was compelled to send his grandsons, Khun Lung and Khun Lai to rule the earth. They were the progenitors of the Tai peoples.

The origin myth in the second chronicle is somewhat different. Indra became afraid of the power making meditation of Rishi Bashishta. Hence, he and the goddess Syama entered into a liaison and engaged in distracting the rishi in his hermitage situated on the banks of the Dikhou river. Bashishta exiled them to earth, and there Indra and Syama became the parents of the first (Tai)Nara[322] ruler, Swarganarayan. Swarganarayan had two divine sons, called Khun Lung and Khun Lai. The Tai group known as Naras grew in number as Indra had to go through a series of human lives, before he was delivered from his punishment on earth.

In both these myths, the emphasis is on the divine origin of the Nara people, the so-called ancestors of the Tai-Ahoms. Notwithstanding the disparities, the connecting link is derived from the semi-divine personages called Khun Lung and Khun Lai. In both versions, the god-sons descent to earth was facilitated by a golden ladder and a number of companions who carried many sacred objects.[323] Both myths have layers of material borrowed from

320. Another name often used in other buranjis is Lengdon (L. Gogoi, *The Buranjis*: Historical Literature *of Assam*, Guwahati; Omsons Publications, 1986, p. 22). Based on the belief in the Absolute Being, the Tai-Ahoms claim that their original religion was Taoism. (For details, see J. Neog, *Tai Jatir Jagaran*, Conference Paper, II Purbanchal Tai Sahitya Sabha, Namrup, 1994; P. Gogoi and B. Gogoi, ed. *Tai-Ahom Dharma*, Dhemaji: Purbanchal Tai Sahitya Sabha, 1994).
321. The Thais also share this origin myth.
322. The Naras will be discussed at length in the next chapter.
323. *Satsari Buranji, Chronicles* I: 1, II: 41.

various sources. Indic elements are evinced in the style of narration while the plot unfolds through the actions of Hindu gods and deities, time is represented by the Indic cycle of Yugas, and there is an attempt to integrate the Lauhitya valley into the sacred geography of the Hindus. Rishi Bashishta is described as meditating on the banks of the Dikhou river, and Khun Lung and Khun Lai, the god-sons, on their descent to earth arrive at Mathura, the birth place or Krishna.[324]

The essential part of the origin myth - Khun Lung and Khun Lai's journey on a ladder from heaven to earth - bears marked similarity with the Bon-Po account of the genesis of their first king and the Buddhistic myths of Myanmar and Thailand. According to the Bon-po tradition of Tibet, Gri-gum-brtsan-po, the first ruler, descended from heaven on a golden rope, and his arrival was heralded by the sound of drums.[325] One cannot overlook that the Bon-po religion was in great force in the fifth and sixth centuries in Tibet during which time the story of origin gained popularity. This was concomitant to the period of the south-west migration of Khun Lung and Khun Lai as recounted in later Assamese narratives. In the Tai-Ahom origin myths, as recounted in the *Satsari Buranji*, the god-sons descended on the mountain of Mung-ri-Mung-ram. The name Mung-ri-Mung-ram is the Tai-Ahom expression for Ming-hi-Mung-ham of the Mao Shans,[326] and is identified by P.R. Gurdon as the region of Chieng-Mai or Zimme in Northern Thailand,[327] but

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324. In another account, the Tai-Ahoms claim that *Rajan Abhishekha* or coronation ceremony of the Swargadeos was held in Charaideo, near Sibsagar, since their ancestors Khunlung and Khunlai originated there. This suggests that the Tai-Ahoms are an autochtonous group of the Lauhitya valley (see B2/E-PCF-16, S.K. Bhuyan Library, Guwahati). Language analyses indicate that areas with diverse languages imply population movement. Based on this hypothesis it is suggested that Assam which has a diversity of languages and peoples is a reasonable 'candidate' for the homeland of the Tibeto-Burman peoples. From here the various peoples migrated to other regions where monolithic communities developed later on. Shared languages play the key role in knitting immigrants toghether (I. Dyen, 'Comment on 'The Frontiers of Burma' of E. Leach', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. iii, no. 1, 1960, pp. 49-68).

325. E. Haarh, *The Yar-Lun Dynasty* (Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad's Forlag, 1969), pp. 145-146; H.H.R. Hoffmann, 'An Account of the Bon Religion in Gilgit,' *Central Asiatic Journal*, vol. xiii, 1969, pp. 137-145.

326. In the Tai-Ahom language 'h' is pronounced as 'r'.

327. P.R. Gurdon, 'The Origin of the Ahoms', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1913, pp. 282-287.

this remains to be conclusively proven. In the Bon-po tradition, the god king descended on a mountain called Dran-mo-dran-chun.[328]

According to Ney Elias, the Mao Shans of Mung-Mao of Myanmar have a similar story. The reign of Khun Lung and Khun Lai, according to this tradition, 'commenced in the year 568 A.D. or the year of Religion IIII sic.: The two divine sons descended from heaven by a golden ladder in the valley of the Shueli river'.[329] Another account recounting the political origins of the Tai peoples affirms that the reign of the two brothers, Khun Lung and Khun Lai, commenced in 835 A.D. in the valley of the Mao river, about fifty miles southwest of Bhamo. Khun Lung, also known as Hkun-lu-Fong, ruled for eight years and was succeeded by his brother, Hkun-Lai who ruled for thirty six years, until 951 A.D.[330]

An origin myth which is not recounted in the *Satsari*, but is otherwise very popular with the Tai-Ahoms is the story of the celestial eggs. This Tai-Ahom myth recounts: 'In the beginning there were no gods and men.... All things were in a condition empty and chaotic.... In the sky were the golden eggs.... The eggs hatched and became kings.... the vapor of the eggs became clouds... the blood of the eggs became water... they of the celestial eggs came forth in splendor.[331] The most conspicuous myth of the Chinese also centers on the celestial egg called Chaos. At a time when there was no earth or heaven, P'an Ku was born from Chaos and was given the task of 'making the heavens and the earth.' The heavy elements of the hatched egg formed the Earth, and the light, pure elements formed the Sky. These were yin and yang.[332]

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328. Hoffmann is of the opinion that this is Mount Meru (Hoffmann, 'Bon Religion', p. 140).
329. Elias, *Introductory Sketch*; p. 13; also see, L. Gogoi, *Buranjis*, p. 22.
330. Milne, *Shans*, pp. 16-19.
331. *Ahom Buranji: From the Earliest Times to the End of the Ahom Rule*, transl. and ed. by G.C. Barua (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, reprint 1985), pp. 1-4; W.W. Cochrane, 'An Ahom Legend of Creation', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London, 1911), pp. 1132-1142.
332. A. Christie, *Chinese Mythology* (Middlesex: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., 1968), p. 49; E.T.C. Werner, *Myths and Legends of China* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd.), p.p. 76-77.

Questing for a hero: Sukapha in the Tai-Ahom history

Connecting the world of mythic-history[333] of gods and the kingdom of the Tai-Ahoms in the Lauhitya valley is an unvarying personage known as Sukapha, recounted in their 'historical' tales as the grandson of Khun Lung and Khun Lai. Sukapha is credited to be the founder of the Tai-Ahom lineage in the Lauhitya valley. Later history has claimed Sukapha as the demarcating point between myth and the beginning of history. Interestingly, the same person, Sukapha, in various forms and with minor orthographical changes, appears in the ancestral tree of many other Shan groups. In the *Hsenwi* chronicle of Mong Mao, Hso Hkan Hpa (1152-1205) is described as the most notable king in the domain located in the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy, on the Shewli river. The story is of an unusually brave male hero who attacked and defeated the Chinese, invaded the Laos states, Chiang Saen, and the Yonok country. He also conquered the Mon kingdom, including Pegu. In his desire to become the king of the entire realm, he deputed his brother, Sam Lung Pha, to invade Manipur, Aracan and Assam. The *Hsenwi* chronicle mentions the conquest of Assam. 'When they entered Weh-sa-li[334] some cowherders reported the arrival of Kaw-sam-pi, the country of white blossoms and large leaves (Mao kingdom), the ministers submitted without resistance, and promised to make an annual payment of twenty five ponies, seven hundred elephants, twenty four viss of gold, and two hundred viss of silver every three years. Hkun-sam-long, the brother of the king, arranged the tribute and withdrew his army from Assam.'[335] According to this tradition, Hso Hkan Hpa died in 1205 A.D. in Mong Mao,[336] long before the Tai-Ahoms settled their first village in Assam.

In another version of a similar story prevalent among the Mao Shans of Moguang, Chao Kam Pha is described as the greatest of

333. To borrow a term used by J. Hill. (J. Hill, ed. *Rethinking History and Myth: Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).
334. The Burmese name for the Lauhitya valley. It bears resemblance to Vaisali, the famous Buddhist site in Bihar. Could this be an attempt of the Burmese court to map Assam within the sacred Buddhist landscape?
335. Milne, *Shans*, pp. 22-23.
336. D. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982, p. 34).

their rulers who ascended to the throne in 1220 A.D. In the early half of the thirteenth century, Sam-Lung-Pha, the ruler of Moguang, who was the brother of Chao Kam Pha of Mung Mao undertook a variety of military campaigns to bring new territories under his rule. His fourth campaign was to the upper Lauhitya valley, "where he conquered the greater portion of the territory then under the sway of the Chutya or Sutya kings."[337]

It is clear that in all three traditions Sukapha plays an important role in the Tai-Shan past. Various groups have devised a glorious beginning from him. One cannot determine the point of origin of the tales of Sukapha. It cannot be ascertained whether each Shan society created their own myth of a dynastic hero, or the myth of Sukapha orginated in one society and spread elsewhere. In the Lauhitya valley, as well as in the tales of the other Shan groups, the genealogy of the community begins from this hero. The male hero Sukapha rises from within the pale of a given society and moves beyond to the unknown zone where treasure and glory lies in the distant land of Weh-sa-li. In the Tai-Ahom quest for the hero called Sukapha, in the late eighteenth century, Swargadeo Gaurinath Singha (1780-95) sent the Nara Bailung pandits to upper Burma to collate the history of his predecessors from the records of the Buddhist temples. This group was particularly motivated to find the history of Sukapha and the *buranjis* of his time.[338] Another reference alludes to a similar enterprise. King Siva Singha (1714-44) gave a royal mandate to one Manohar, head of the Bailung and Ahom scribes, to the following effect, "that the histories of the king's predecessors should be compiled, the succession of Ahom monarchs mentioned in detail and the book should be called *Roopoot*, that the history should only contain the names and transactions of the *Swargadeos* or Ahom kings."[339]

The 'historical gossip'[340] about Sukapha as the founder of the kingdom of the Tai-Ahoms is deeply entrenched in the local Assamese tradition, so much so, that in the present one can no longer seive fact from fiction. According to the standard textbook

337. Elias, *Introductory Sketch*, pp. 17-18.
338. For details, see *Assam Buranji*, K. Tamuli-Phukan (Calcutta: 1908), p. 8.
339. Wade, *Account of Assam*, p. ii.
340. To borrow Vansina's term. (See J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

account, in 1215 A.D. Sukapha, along with a sizeable number of men, embarked on a route of westward migration from the Nara kingdom carrying with them a good deal of provisions for the journey and the icon of Somdeo, which assured Sukapha success and prosperity in the venture.[341] This group traversed the passes in the Patkai mountain range, having fought the opposing Naga groups who were finally subdued through harsh punishments.[342]

The consensus on the messianic role of Sukapha in founding the kingdom of the Tai-Ahoms notwithstanding, there is an utter confusion in the dates of the presumed Tai-Ahom migration and subsequent settlement in the Lauhitya valley. The first chronicle of the *Satsari* provides the dates 1215 A.D. as the beginning of the migration and 1228 as the initial period of the Tai-Ahom settlement in the Lauhitya valley. According to the second chronicle of the *buranji*, the journey commenced in 1170 saka or 1248 A.D.[343] After fourteen years of journeying, in 1262, Sukapha and his men settled their first village in the upper reaches of the river valley.[344] Sukapha and his group, however, moved from one locality to another in search of fertile river banks. After twenty four years of searching, he settled at Songtok, situated on the banks of the Dikhou river which is a tributary of the Lohit river. Here, Sukapha declared himself king of the domain and assumed the title of *Tyaolung*. On receiving the news, the Nara king, Sukhrang Pha, sent a variety of presents to Tyaolung Sukapha, including 'a golden cap, a royal shirt made of silver and a pair of golden sandals'.[345] The settlement of Songtok, however, was not permanent. Tyaolung

341. Somdeo was the Tai-Ahom royal icon. Possession of this icon conferred political legitimacy on Sukapha and his men to rule the Lauhitya valley. One cannot help wondering if the stone linga of Somdeo was a linga. The phallic representation of the Hindu god, Shiva.
342. Assamese scholars have read the *buranjis* as candid 'historical texts' primarily based on their reading of the early punishment system of the Tai-Ahoms. The *buranjis* are thus accepted as 'truthful' records of exact events and the Tai-Ahoms are seen as unique people who acted out their part in dichotomies of beginning and end, good and bad, structure and superstructure, royalty and subjects, Brahmanism, i.e. civilization, versus Shamanism, i.e. primitive existence. One needs to bear in mind that right and wrong are culturally encoded and has different meanings and implications in different societies expressed from different perspectives of different power groups.
343. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 114, pp. 45-46.
344. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 115, pp. 46-47.
345. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 117, p. 48.

Sukapha wanted the area around the Dikhou river which was settled by the Kacharis. By stratagem they were removed and Sukapha occupied the fertile banks of the Dikhoumukh. The first *buranji* says that he ruled for thirty three years thereafter,[346] while the second suggests that he was the leader for forty two years from the time the Tai-Ahoms left the Nara kingdom. Sukapha died in 1190 saka or 1268 A.D.[347]

These dates given in the *Satsari* are not verified by other *buranjis*. In an unpublished *Assam Buranji* the story about Sukapha is thus narrated. 'In saka 1260 a boy was born in the kingdom of Nara Sengdam. He became king in Saumar in 1284 (1362 A.D.).[348] He was succeeded by his son in saka 1311.'[349] Moreover, saka 1284 is endorsed as the date of Sukapha's ascension to power in two more narratives also titled *Assam Buranji*.[350] Concerning his birth date another source provides the date as saka 1149 (1227 A.D.). From the same source we learn that 'accompanied by a few men totalling to about four hundred and eighty, Sukapha left the Nara kingdom in 1169 saka (1247 A.D.)'.[351] Contradicting this, the *Ahom Buranji* of Haliram Barua records 1195 A.D. as the year of Sukapha's birth and notes that he invaded Assam in 1246 A.D.[352] The Deodhai *Ahom Buranji* mentions that Sukapha was born in 1211 A.D. and entered Assam in 1228 A.D., thirteen years after he had left Mungri-Mungaram.[353] If this is so, Sukapha would be the youngest known conqueror recorded in the world's history, as he was only four years of age when he left his home.

The problem of dating is crucial. 1228 A.D. has been fixed as the beginning of the Tai-Ahom rule in the Lauhitya valley by modern scholars using 'scientific' methods to recover the events of

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346. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 20, p. 7.
347. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 119, p. 49.
348. According to the *Yogini Tantra* four piths constituted the realm of north-east India, including Bhutan. They are Ratna Pith, Kama Pith, Swarna Pith and Saumar Pith. The area of Saumar Pith corresponds roughly to upper Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.
349. *Assam Buranji*, Ms. 59.
350. *Assam Buranji*, ed. S.K. Bhuyan (Guwahati: D.H.A.S., 1963); *Assam Buranji*, ed. H.D. Goswami (Guwahati: Kamrupa Anushandhan Samiti (KAS), 1922).
351. H. Goswami, 'Sukapha', *Banhi*, vol. xvii, no. 9, 1851 saka, pp. 414-16.
352. H. Barua, *Ahom Buranji* (Calcutta, 1906), pp. 44-45.
353. *Deodhai Ahom Buranji*, ed. S.K. Bhuyan (Guwahati: D.H.A.S. 3rd ed. 1990), pp. 4-5.

the past. Taking the instance of a solar eclipse which occurred in 1485 A.D. scholars have tried to (re)construct the time period when the Tai-Ahoms probably commenced their rule in the Lauhitya valley.[354] It is essential to remind ourselves here that the Tai-Ahoms did not have an era in the ordinary sense but computed time by means of the large Jovian cycle of sixty years, which they called *tao singa*. This system was also known to the Chinese but they used a smaller cycle of twelve years, which was unknown to the Shans.[355] Each year of the *tao singa* was called a *lakli*. In the Tai-Ahom system the *laklis* or years were named, not numbered, and the names were formed by compounding words of two series. Naturally, it is hopelessly confusing to locate a *lakli* to a particular *tao singa*, since our source, the *buranjis*, do not provide this information.[356]

Probably, the 'textualization' of the past in the Tai-Ahom community began in full earnest much later after the events had occurred. The 'text' society of the Lauhitya valley was a conglomeration of various peoples, ideas, cultures and ways of perceptions. In fact, it was the cumulative expression of a community's long experiences and deepening perception of its own identity. This unique perception and representation is the crux of what we know and call 'Ahom'. This complex mix cannot be reduced to a single community, nor to one dramatic event. Neither was it a progression arrived at after centuries of struggle. It was an expression of heterogenous communities coming together in a process of 'becoming' a socio-cultural entity manifested in a riverine polity.

The tradition of constructing a fantastic genealogy which was likewise shared by many other members of the Shan confederacy without confusion, reminds me of the convention followed in the *Glass Palace Chronicles* of Burma in which the story of Buddha and his visit to Burma is recounted in great details. The style and

354. See N.N. Acharyya, *The Medieval History of Assam* (Guwahati: Dutta Baruah and Co., 1966).

355. E. Gait, *History of Assam*, reprint (Calcutta: Thacker Spink and Co. 1963), p. 420.

356. Aside from the technical problems which one has to deal with in converting the Jovian cycle into the Christian era, a further problem is in dealing with the confusing details recorded in the narratives. There are only a few instances in which the scribes agree to a common date, name or place.

content of these narrations borrowed directly from the *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* chronicles of Ceylon. However, the writers of the Burmese chronicles did not agonize for plagiarism. It was a convention to record the history of a Buddhist kingdom within the parameters of that world view. It was also a way of making merit. Buddha is the central figure in this tradition and hence everything flows from the central node. The Tai-Ahoms of the Lauhitya valley when they wrote their past they incorporated the stories of Khun Lung, Khun Lai and later Sukapha, which were indigenized to provide meanings in the Assamese context. The past had to have heroes and glory, and legendary figures were conveniently positioned in the new plot. Marvelous actions were attributed to these personages in the valley to derive a sense of continuity and to delineate a homogenous past for the Tai-Ahom peoples along with the other groups of the Mekong valley.

The Political Geography of the Tai-Ahoms: Finding the 'self' in dialogue with 'others'

Through the long period of their migration, from the Nara kingdom to the Lauhitya valley, the Tai-Ahoms met with different groups of people. Some befriended them, while others offered armed resistance. These encounters and exchanges are noted in detail in the *Satsari Buranji*. In fact, the primary focus of this text is on the representation of the Tai-Ahom 'self' which generated in dialogue with 'other' peoples, and in the long run demarcated them as distinct and different from the rest. Their new identity, as Tai-Ahom, shaped the subsequent political organization, and the royal institution of *Swargadeo* having absorbed streams of borrowings was upheld as the dynamic representation of the entire Assamese culture.'

The Tai-Ahoms had two broad categories for viewing the other peoples whom they encountered. The peoples of the Lauhitya valley were treated as rivals but belonging to the land, while all other peoples living beyond the western limit of the Tilau or Lohit river, that is Guwahati, were referred to by a single, comprehensive term 'Bengali' and were the foreigners.[357] Until the mid-fifteenth

357. Even the Mughals are referred to as 'Bengali'. Politically, the Mughal Badshah and the Nawab of Bengal were treated as separate entities. But the general populace, both the Mughal subjects and the peoples of Bengal, were called 'Bengali' by the Tai-Ahoms.

century, the Tai-Ahoms were occupied in fighting the various groups within. The political situation changed after they won a decisive victory against the Chutias and assumed supreme political power in upper Assam. Thereupon, confrontation between the Tai-Ahoms and the 'Bengalis' became more frequent.

The Morans and Barahis

The first group of people that the Tai-Ahoms encountered in the Lauhitya valley are referred to in the *buranji* as the Morans and Barahis.[358] The newly arrived group found that the fertile river banks of the Lauhitya were already occupied and settled by the Kacharis in the south, and the Morans and Barahis in the north. The remaining area was heavily forested and unsuitable for habitation. Socialization with the Morans and Barahis, who were receptive to the Tai-Ahoms, was done by ritual defeat and alliances. Initially twelve households of Morans and seven households of Barahis welcomed the settlers and gave their women in marriage 'and thus women were introduced in their group, since no Tai-Ahom women had accompanied the early migrants'.[359] The strategy by which the Tai-Ahoms became king, of the Morans is narrated at length in a treatise of the *Bhalukpang Raja*[360] further confirmed by other accounts.[361] Also the Morans made a *chang ghar* for the visiting Tai-Ahom chief. Much later, when an important life cycle of the Tai-Ahom kings was completed and various material objects came into use as distinguishing marks of being 'Tai-Ahom', it was stipulated that only the king could live in a chang and the common

358. The history of these groups is not well known. According to some sources the term 'Barahi' is derived from 'Borah' meaning pig. They were riverine dwellers living between the Dihing and Dikkahu. The Morans, some say, are Mattak. According to the *Chandrakanta Abhidhan*, the Mattaks were a powerful group of Tai people who migrated from Burma and settled in the upper part of eastern Assam. The Tai-Ahoms called them Tai-Klang. The Mattaks and the Barahis, both these groups paid tax to the Nara king. An officer called Biman was sent to collect the dues from the Morans and Barahis, besides the Nagas, the Chutias and Kamteshwar, long before Sukapha invaded Weh-sa-li. (See P. Gogoi, 'Ahoms in the Mayamara Sect,' *The Journal of the Assam Research Society*, KAS, vol. xxiii, 1977-78, pp. 27-38; *Assam Buranji*, Ms. 59).

359. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 12, pp. 4-5.

360. *Bhalukpang Raja and other miscellaneous events of Assam history*, B2/ABC-2, S.K. Bhuyan Library, Guwahati.

361. *Assam Buranji*, Ms. 59.

people, including the Morans, could not own or live in a similar house.[362]

To legitimize their political authority, the settlers contrived an image to suit the needs of the subject groups. Drawing upon the origin myth of divine dispensation to rule the chaotic land and bring peace and prosperity, Sukapha designated himself as *Tyaolung* 'looking for the kingdom he was sent to govern.'[363] The Morans and Barahis, who were without a king of their own, did not desire to resist the divine plan. They welcomed the new lord and his group, who settled in their domain and 'enjoyed the returns of the harvest of that year'. The two groups entered into tributary relationship with the Tyao, and agreed to supply vegetables, firewood and salt.[364] Some of their men were taken in employment by Sukapha and were assigned the tasks of water-carrier, cook, *bej*[365] and so on. In the reign of the later Swargadeos many of the Morans and Barahis where upgraded and designated as Ahoms.[366] However, in the initial stage of settlement only the newly arrived group of rulers and administrators were referred to as 'Ahoms', meaning heavenly creatures, who had no parallel.[367] Thus, they became known as the Ahoms of Assam.[368] Based on the newly acquired label, the Tai-Ahoms constructed their socio-cultural geography designating those within the fold as 'Ahoms' or rulers, while the non-Ahoms

362. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 83, p. 29.
363. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 14, pp. 5-6.
364. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 17, p. 6, 1: 30, p. 10; *Chronicle* II: 118, pp. 48-49.
365. Village practitioner who combined Shamanist rituals with herbal concoctions to cure the sick.
366. In this context it appears that 'Ahom' was an administrative body made up of the various autochthonous peoples of Assam. The later 'Ahoms' were called 'Aniyamar Ahoms' or 'not-real Ahoms'. (See *Assam Buranjis*, Ms. 59; also 'Historical Notes' from the *Assam Buranji*, B1/R6/A, S.K. Bhuyan Library, Guwahati).
367. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 17, p. 6.
368. Dr Wade has suggested a new interpretation for the term 'Ahom'. The consort of the Nara king who was impregnated by Lord Indra asked him if he intended to come to her again. To this the god replied, 'Ahim, Ahim', literally 'I will come, I will come'. The term Ahom developed from Ahim. (Wade, *History of Assam*). The prefix 'Tai' has gained currency in very recent times since an attempt has been made to study the history of Assam linking it to South-East Asia. (See P. Gogoi, *The Tai and the Ancient Tai Kingdom*; G. Coedes, *The Indianized States of South-East Asia*; Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 3rd ed. 1968, pp. 180-81; B.J. Terwiel, *The Tai of Assam and the Ancient Tai Ritual, 2 vols.*, Gaya: Review Office of South East Asian Studies, 1980).

were to be their service groups supporting a divine rulership. The riverine polity of the 'Ahoms' founded in the thirteenth century was to determine the next six hundred years of the history of Lauhitya valley.

The Kacharis

The Tai-Ahom relation with the Kacharis was remarkably different in comparison to the pact made with the Morans and Barahis. The Kacharis claim their descent from the demoness Hirimba and thus their kings are known as Hirimbeshwar. Dimapur is the modern name of the Kachari capital city Hirimbapur. The entire Kachari kingdom comprised of the Naga, Jaiantia and the Kachar hills which together were referred to as Kashyapagiri or tortoise hills and hence the group came to be called Kachari.[369] The Kachari domain in the Lauhitya valley covered the area from the Dikhou to the Kalang, stretching along the northern banks of the Brahmaputra river. They also ruled over the region of the Dhansiri and the Kachar hills, with their principal centres located in Mayang and Kasamari pathar near the Doyang river.

From the beginning, the Tai-Ahom and Kachari relationship was determined by the struggle for control of the fertile riverine Dikhoumukh. The Kachari culture was a rice culture.[370] Through their knowledge and practice of wet-rice cultivation, the Kacharis distinguished themselves from the 'wild' hunter-gatherers and non-rice cultivators—such as the Morans, the Barahis, the Chutias and other 'tribal' peoples of the upper Lauhitya valley. The Tai-Ahoms made their initial move to occupy the Kachari rice fields, which they rightly anticipated could allow them to appropriate the economic power of the valley and thus allow them to exert political leverage over the subject groups. Sukapha and his men ascertained that the total strength of the Kacharis at Dikhoumukh was four thousand men, who were too formidable for the handful of Tai-Ahoms to engage in direct confrontation.[371] The deliberations with the Kacharis was initiated by Sukapha who declared, 'this is my domian... if they want to stay here, they should pay tribute to me.'[372] The Kacharis refused to oblige. It was decided that a contest

369. Agarwala, *Ancient Assam*, p. 14.
370. *Deodhai Buranji*, 153:100, 313:176, 316:180; *Satsari, Chronicle* 1:13,
371. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 13, p. 5.
372. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 21, pp. 7-8.

necessary between the two parties and that the superior group should have the rights of that domain. Deceptive cleverness, so admired by the Tai-Ahoms, helped them win the competition. The Kacharis left Dikhoumukh for Saring, where they settled for a while.

For over a century, the Kacharis and the Tai-Ahoms maintained a guarded distance and no event occurred which involved both the parties. In 1489 A.D., during the reign of Tyao Suhen, the Kacharis took the offensive and attacked the Tai-Ahom domain. Tyao Suhen fled to the opposite bank of the Dikhou and peace was negotiated between the two parties after the Tai-Ahom Tyao gifted a princess called Langji and an elephant to the Kachari king.[373] The Tai-Ahom gesture of gifting a royal princess and an elephant, and, in turn, the Kacharis acceptance of this gift opened a line of communication between the two groups. This was neither the first nor the last time that such gifts were given or received.

Both parties continued to claim the region of south Dikhou, which gave fresh reason for renewed confrontation. Anticipating defeat, the Tai-Ahoms refused to fight. Instead, elaborate strategies were planned, once again. The Kacharis were forced to retreat and the Tai-Ahoms occupied the entire region from the Dikhou to the banks of the Dhansiri river. Further, the Kacharis had to accept the Tai-Ahom chief as their overlord and they agreed to pay annual tribute in the form of elephants, silver and corvee labor.[374] The Dikhou river was fixed as the eastern boundary between the Tai-Ahoms and the Kacharis.

The Kacharis being chased away from Dikhoumukh resettled in Mayang and established a new line of kings who were autonomous of Hirimbapur and also of the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeos*.[375] In the seventeenth century, Swargadeo Pratap Singha (1603-1641) desired to reduce the Kacharis into complete submission, once and for all. The Kacharis and Jaiantia enemity was played upon to the Tai-Ahom advantage, and Swargadeo Pratap Singha accepted the Jaiantia king's offer to marry a princess and

373. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 35, p. 12; *Chronicle* II: 129, pp. 155-156.
374. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 48, pp. 15-16; *Chronicle* III: 144, pp. 68-69.
375. *Kachari Rajar Vamsavali*, Ms. 149.

escort her through the Kachari domain.[376] This plan was devised to harass the Kacharis by intruding into their political space, which if proven successful would symbolize the overlordship of the Tai-Ahoms. But an attack on the western front by the 'Bengali, army diverted Pratap Singha's attention to that sector, and he hastily made peace with the Kacharis.[377] Emboldened, the Kachari chief asked for the gift of a Tai-Ahom princess. Pratap Singha snubbed the Kachari messenger and sent him away without any reply.[378] In the reign of Swargadeo Sutyanpha (1644-1648), and again in the reign of Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-1663), the Kacharis sent their envoy with a request for a Tai-Ahom royal woman. Gifting and receiving of women, in this case, would have meant accepting the Kachari king as an equal of the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo*. For centuries, the Tai-Ahoms had tried to subject the Kacharis to their vassalage. At this time, too, they did not show any inclination to revert that policy. Swargadeo Jayadhvaj Singha 'chased the Kachari messenger out of his kingdom.'[379]

After this interlude, political exchange between the Tai-Ahoms and the Kacharis ceased for a considerable period of time. In the reign of Swargadeo Rudra Singha (1696-1714), the Kachari king, Jai Singh, sent message demanding the return of the territory that the Tai-Ahoms had occupied from them. Livid with anger, Rudra Singha bodily 'attacked the messenger, tore the letter and asked his courtiers to chase the man out of the capital complex.'[380] An army was sent to confiscate 'the rice fields' and attack the Kachari capital at Demara Maibang. The Kachari chief fled to the Jaiantia domain, an event which then dragged the Jaiantias into war with the Tai-Ahoms. After protracted warfare, the chiefs of both the Jaiantias and the Kacharis accepted Swargadeo Rudra Singha as their overlord.[381] But the relationship between the Kachari lord and the Tai-Ahom overlord was not long lasting. On the occasion of the enthronement ceremony of Pramatta Singha (1744-1751), the

376. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 166, pp. 78-79.
377. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 169, pp. 80-81.
378. According to the *Kachari Rajar Vamsavali*, the Tai-Ahoms gifted a girl to the Kachari king, Beerdarpa Narayan (Ms. 149).
379. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 185, p. 89.
380. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 241, pp. 120-121.
381. The buranji notes that the 'Jaiantia chief lamented that he would die an unheroic death, like a woman' (*Satsari, Chronicle* III: 242, pp. 121-122).

Kachari chief was invited to attend the Tai-Ahom coronation ceremony. This was a symbolic gesture accepting the Kachari autonomy.

The protracted relationship between the Tai-Ahoms and the Kacharis, it seems, did not produce a worthwhile exchange. At the time of a common threat from the foreign 'Bengalis', the two groups came together. Further, the importation of brahmans to Assam provided a basis for dialogues and exchanges between the two courts. A veneer of a common court culture was generated through the ritual activities of these men. However, when the threat of the imperialistic Muslims died down, the Tai-Ahoms and the Kacharis parted company, and both groups were once again pitched against each other, making claims to the rights of cultivation and political power in the agricultural heartland. Notwithstanding, in folk-discourse many stories are recounted which affirm to the close contact and continuous dialogues between the common peoples of both the groups informing and influencing each other at various socio-cultural levels. In the end, the Kacharis were probably the only powerful group in the Lauhitya valley that survived the subjugation of the Tai-Ahoms, although they never rose in power to become the kings of Assam.

The Chutias

In the thirteenth century, the Chutias were by far the most powerful group in the upper Lauhitya valley having a king and a capital city at Sadiya. They ruled the area of the Suvansari—the river of gold-sands. The eastern extremity of this kingdom opened into the mountains inhabited by the Abors, Mishimis, Bhutiyas, and others, and they controlled the trade that passed between the Assam valley and the hills of Bhutan and Tibet.[382] Robinson in his *History of Assam* describes the Chutia people as being of a Shan background who had settled in the province before the Tai-Ahoms migrated to the valley.[383] The Tai-Ahoms call these people Tewra or Tiuri. Linguistically, the Chutias are connected to the Bodo people.[384] Popular opinion holds that Chutia is derived from Swati

382. M'Cosh, *Topography of Assam*, pp. 66, 147; Robinson, *Account of Assam*, pp. 296, 347-350.
383. Robinson, *Account of Assam*, pp. 296-297.
384. *Census Report*, 1891; *Awahan, saka* 1852, vol. ii, no. ii, pp. 140-41.

which is the local name for the region of Suvansiri. According to an Assamese narrative, in 951 A.D., seven families of brahmans were imported to Kamarupa from Bengal. The immigrants formed a collective society which was called Bara Bhuyan. In the early eleventh century, due to the rebellion of the Bhuts, some of the members of the Bara Bhuyan confederacy fled to Sadiya and joined the local peoples there to form a political domain. When the Tai-Ahoms confronted the Chutias, they were a semi-Hinduised people with a glamourous royal court, to which was added commercial power from trade with neighbouring regions. This made the Chutia domain very attractive to the new settlers. Faced with significant political opposition from the Kacharis, the Tai-Ahoms sought the friendship of the Chutias. An early attempt, in the mid-fourteenth century, did not produce positive results and there was a lull for nearly a century.[385]

Tyaopha Suhungmung, commonly known as Dihingiya Raja (1497-1539), sent some of his officers to Habung, probably situated near the Chutia domain. There they recruited a pseudo-brahman, who represented himself as a Tai, to serve in the fledging Tai-Ahom administration. He was given an office along with presents consisting 'of a golden thread, elephants, pigs, and an imperial office.'[386] Thereupon, the Chutia king, Bir Narayan, sent his spies to the Tai-Ahom domain. These spurious exchanges, finally, gave rise to armed confrontation in which the Chutias were defeated. 'The Chutias lost many soldiers in the battle, about four thousand of them. Nearly three thousand more were captured by our men.' The captives were killed, 'and a garland was made of their skulls and put in the deoghar in Habung.'[387] Bir Narayan agreed to make peace, and 'promised not to fight us every year. Rather, he agreed to pay annual tribute.' But this was not enough. Dihingiya Raja demanded from the Chutia king 'the golden tooth, the golden cat, the golden

385. According to the second chronicle, Tyao Lungsutampha (1364-1376) was killed by the Chutia king (*Satsari, Chronicle* II: 122, p. 51). This information is not quite accurate. Tyao Lungsutampha was not the chief at the time the incident occurred, that is in 1380 A.D. or saka 1302. Tyaokhamti (also known as Tyao Phrakampha) was the Tai-Ahom chief. It is not really important who was the ruler at that particular time. However, it is essential to note that in the early stage of their settlement, the Tai-Ahoms tried to court the powerful Chutias. The Ahom attitude changed when they met with failure.

386. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 130, p. 56.

387. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 131, pp. 56-58.

bed, his oldest daughter, a female elephant and ten additional elephants. The Chutia king replied that he would gladly give his daughter, a female elephant and ten more elephants. But the golden tooth, the cat and the bed were his heirlooms and he could not part with them.'[388]

The refusal re-kindled tension between the Tai-Ahoms and the Chutias. The Tai-Ahoms took the offensive and attacked Sadiya, both by land and water. The Chutia king fled to the mountains, providing Dihingiya Raja with the opportunity to occupy the capital, Sadiya. Meanwhile, the fleeing Chutia king was killed and thus ended the political power of the Chutias in upper Assam. The *Raja Vamshavali* of the Chutias have a different story to tell. According to this source, the Chutia rule ended in 1598 A.D.[389] For the intervening period between 1535 to 1598, there is no recorded history. Some sources say that 'the Chutia king had a son called Senglung. The Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo* made him the third minister and gave him the title of *Bar Patra Gohain*. He was made equal in rank to the *Bar Gohain* and the *Bura Gohain* and was placed over the Chutias, Morans and Barahis. This made the Chutias very happy and from then on the Chutias were considered an integral part of the Tai-Ahom kingdom'.[390] However, this information is not corroborated by other sources. From the *Satsari* we learn that after the decisive defeat of the Chutias, the Tai-Ahoms 'captured the Chutia princess, thirty elephants, sixty horses, seventy five muskets, war-armour, cows, buffaloes, and also took the Chutia royal umbrella, the royal chair, the Chutia royal dress and a variety of other articles. We (the Ahom) took captive a large number of brahmans, astrologers, masons and artisans.'[391] The region of Sadiya was occupied and an imperial officer designated as *Sadiya Khowa Gohain*[392] was appointed. Phransengmung, the former *Bar Gohain* of the Tai-Ahom domain, was appointed as the *Sadiya Khowa Gohain* and was given the right to collect revenue and administer the newly annexed province. 'Further, three hundred men were put under his command, and he was given three

388. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 132, p. 58; *Chronicle* I:42, pp. 13-14.
389. 'Chutia Rajatta', *Banhi*, saka 1845, vol. xiii, no. iv, pp. 114-5.
390. Ibid.
391. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 43, p. 14.
392. Literally 'Sadiya eating minister'.

elephants and his headquarter was established in the Chutia capital of Sadiya.'[393]

The defeat of the Chutias was the turning point in the political evolution of the Tai-Ahom in Assam. The transformation was dramatic. From a colony of struggling agriculturalists with pretensions to divine rulership, now the Tai-Ahoms had a real, royal paraphernalia appropriated from the defeated Chutias. The Tai-Ahom *Tyao* promoted himself and became the *Swargadeo*.[394] The announcement of newly constructed sovereignty was made in royal style. 'Dihingiya Raja offered worship in the temple constructed on the foothills of the mountains.... Having in his possession the Chutia royal symbols, the golden tooth, the cat, the umbrella, etc., he entered his domain in due ceremony to the victorious sound of drums. He declared himself the *Swargadeo* of the entire region and sat on the royal chair. Later, he presented *hengdans* to three ministers and appointed his chair bearers. It was also declared that none, but he—the overlord of the region—could sit on the special chair. This event took place in lakli Pleksing, saka 1445.'[395]

From this time onward, the Tai-Ahom *Siu* or *Tyao* was referred to as the *Swargadeo*. It is necessary to note here that the term *Swargadeo* is almost absent in the first two chronicles of the *Satsari*, especially in the period of their initial settlement, that is from the thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries. The term recurs throughout the text after the Chutias were defeated by the Tai-Ahoms, in the early-sixteenth century. Suhungmung or Dihingiya Raja (1497-1539) is referred to in the *buranji* as Maharaja. His successor, Suklengmung, however, is called Swargaraja.[396] The subsumption of a vast number of new peoples under the political umbrella of the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo* resulted in new challenges. The immediate need was to expand the administrative structure. The Barahis, the Morans and the captive Chutias were grouped together and a Naga, called Kangseng was appointed as *Tyao*

393. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 134, pp. 60-61.
394. The term Swargadeo, literally 'the spirit of heaven' is derived from Sanskrit. It was introduced in Assam much later, when the brahmans became the 'religio-cultural brokers' of the Tai-Ahom royalty.
395. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 134, pp. 60-61; *Chronicle* IV: 262, pp. 135-136.
396. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 57, p. 20.

Konwar (or *Bar Patra Gohain*) to administer them. Now the Tai-Ahom kingdom had three royal ministers—the *Bar Gohain*, the *Bura Gohain* and the newly appointed *Bar Patra Gohain*.[397] Concomitant with the administrative changes, new cultural categories were also devised to express the Tai-Ahom 'self' in contrast to the non-Tai-Ahom 'other' peoples. Through encounters and opposition with the indigenous peoples, primarily the powerful Chutias, a new cultural identity of the Tai-Ahoms evolved. Food, dress, and abode were manipulated to symbolize 'we are Ahoms' and with the same token 'we are the rulers of the riverine domain'. The new identity as 'Ahom' meant noble, pedigreed, and superior to other peoples of the polity. 'The king ordered that sons and grandsons of the former chiefs should be brought to his presence. Each of them was given an unit to command. He forbade them to quarrel amongst themselves.... Those born out of wedlock were designated as Handique. They could not become princes. That was determined to be their proof of birth. These men could socialize with Ahoms. Ahoms could eat from their plates. In turn, Ahoms were ordered not to abuse or ridicule the Handiques.'[398] We also read that 'the progeny of the Barahis, who had befriended the early Tai-Ahom settlers were rewarded with commands in the newly annexed region of the vanquished Chutia kingdom. Four of them were named as Chutia. The commoners among the Barahis, Chutias, Morans, and Kacharis from then on were called Chutia. However, the new Chutias could not be Ahoms.... it was stipulated that the status quo should be maintained.'[399]

Further, spatial and material relations were also utilized to differentiate and represent the Tai-Ahom 'self' and 'other'. The Tai-Ahom housing and dress were not just any available dwelling and clothing but important methaphors of their culture. Hindus were prohibited from building *chang ghar*. Dress and housing were indices of being 'Tai-Ahom'. Besides dress, jewelry and ornaments distinguished Tai-Ahom nobility from the non-Tai-Ahom commoners. They were not permitted to wear gold ornaments and their women could not wear fancy gold embroidered Mekhala

397. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 40, p. 13.
398. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 41, p. 13.
399. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 46, p. 15.

Chadar.[400] The once powerful Chutias were reduced to submission and many were sold into slavery. On the occasion of the marriage of Parbatiya Gohain's daughter to Swargadeo Pratap Singha, Chutias were given as slaves in her dowry.[401]

Other Groups

Besides the sedentarized peoples of the Lauhitya valley, a variety of other peoples, some having grand imperial institutions, while others were primarily kinship groups, are mentioned in various context in the *Satsari Buranji.* These people on the whole are represented under the broad category of 'tribals'. The Jaiantia were one such politically organized group. Their kingdom consisted of the Jaiantia hills and later they occupied the region bordering the Surma valley and thus the borders of their kingdom on both sides were contiguous to Bengal.[402] The kingdom of the Jaiantias was the famed 'kingdom of women' against whom Arjuna, the hero of *Mahabharata*, had to wage war. It was also a semi-Brahmanised polity which combined strong overtones of Tantric worship in royal rituals, probably borrowed from Bengal. The strategic position of the Jaiantia kingdom, bordering the powerful rivals of the Tai-Ahoms, the Bengalis, caused much concern to the *Swargadeo.* Hence the Tai-Ahom initiative for establishing friendship with the Jaiantia royal family. Matrimonial alliance at the level of royalty was a traditional symbol of truce and making of goodwill and this practice was invoked by the Tai-Ahom Swargadeo Pratap Singha who took in marriage a Jaiantia princess. This incident provoked the renewal of tension between the Kacharis and the Tai-Ahoms, which has been discussed earlier.

The marriage of the two households was more than a clever political move for it brought along with it the Brahmanised Jaiantia religion which significantly affected the Tai-Ahom royal religious outlook. The original religion of the Tai-Ahoms was not a precisely defined belief system. Like the Bon-pos of Tibet, the Tai-Ahoms were practicioners of a form of Shamanism, akin to Nature Worship. Divination, oracles, expelling the evil spirits who brought misfortune, disease, etc., propriation of the various *Phis* or spirits,

400. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 83, p. 29.
401. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 68, p. 24.
402. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 77, p. 27.

sacrifices of animals and even human beings were among the fundamentals of the old Tai-Ahom faith. There were no temples or monastaries, no monks or nuns, but *deodhais*, literally mid-wives of gods, who delivered the messages of the *Phis* to the royalty and the populace, in life and death.[403] The similarities between the old Tai-Ahom and the Bon-Po faiths are too obvious to discount the possibility of exchange and assimilation at some level.

In the *Satsari Buranji* mention is made to the worship of *Seng*, the deity of royalty about which I will discuss in the next chapter. Also ancestor worship continued to be practised till the last days of the Tai-Ahom rule. According to this *buranji*, after the marriage of Swargadeo Pratap Singha to the Jaiantia princess, many elements of Brahmanism were introduced in the Tai-Ahom kingdom which gained precedence over the old Shamanist faith and rituals. 'A temple dedicated to the Mother Goddess, Durga, was built and a brahman priest from the Jaiantia kingdom was brought to take care of the premise.' [404]

From the reign of Swargadeo Rudra Singha (1696-1714), it became a royal norm to patronise Brahmanism which was done in eleborate style as a strategy to undermine and usurp the political authority of the Hindu Jaiantias. Making a pretext of assisting 'Barkrishna Barthakur to bring the icon of the Jaiantia goddess to the Tai-Ahom Swargadeo', the Tai-Ahom army invaded the Jaiantia kingdom. The Jaiantia king, Ram Singh, was captured and taken prisoner and the icon of the goddess was brought to the Tai-Ahom capital.[405] This was housed in the famous Buri Gosani temple, initially in Garhgaon and later moved to Jorhat by Swargadeo Gaurinath Singha when he shifted his capital to the new city.[406] However, after removing the icon of the goddess from the Jaiantia kingdom believed to be the real source endowing power upon the Jaiantia royalty, Swargadeo Rudra Singha did not care to directly annex the Jaiantia domain. This was politically an expedient move.

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403. For details on the death ritual prevelant among the Bon-Po see, P. Kvaerne, *Tibet Bon Religion* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985).
404. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 67, p. 24.
405. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 242, pp. 121-122.
406. The actual icon which is rumoured to be really a precious stone, probably a ruby flower, is no longer in possession of the temple authorities. The present icon is represented as the female goddess Mahisha-Mardini Durga.

Instead he placed a titular king on the Jaiantia throne who accepted the overlordship of the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo*. As well, a resident Tai-Ahom officer, Bahbariya Krishna, was appointed to monitor the activities in the Jaiantia court.[407]

A few Naga groups, namely Namsangiya,[408] Tangsoo,[409] Aakhampha,[410] and Sayaniya[411] are mentioned in the *buranji*. In the reign of Tayo Sujanpha (1407-1422), the Aakhampha made a show of peace by 'immersing their hands in water' with the Tai-Ahoms, but they along with the Tangsoo Nagas continued to create havoc in the kingdom.[412] As a means to pacify the recalcitrant Nagas, Swargadeo Suklengmung made a gift of arable land and accepted a Tangsoo chief as a noble in the Tai-Ahom court. Sulikpha, or Lara Raja, also gave land, allocated twenty men and gifted a woman to the Naga chief.[413] His successor, Swargadeo Gadadhar Singha, however, decided to fight the Namsangiya Nagas, defeated them and compelled them to pay tribute.[414] In the late-eighteenth century, Nagas were appointed in the Tai-Ahom royal administration, especially to facilitate communication with the British administration in Calcutta.[415] But the relationship between the Tai-Ahoms and the Nagas remained unsteady throughout.

A wide variety of 'tribal' peoples, besides the Nagas, such as the Miris, Mishimis, Daflas, Abors, etc., also periodically interacted with the Tai-Ahoms, sometimes violently in battle. In the seventeenth century there was an increase in tension. As a result of the continuous war with the 'Bengali army', the Tai-Ahom treasury was seriously depleted and new tax bases were needed to finance the campaigns. The 'tribal', trading communities were expected to provide the much needed resources. Pratap Singha fought against these peoples, defeated all of them and 'forced them to pay tax which was of great service to the king.'[416]

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407. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 243, p. 122.
408. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 234, p. 177.
409. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 24, p. 9.
410. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 128, pp. 54-55.
411. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 263, pp. 136-138.
412. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 128, pp. 54-55.
413. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 70, p. 25.
414. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 234, p. 117.
415. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 280, pp. 153-154.
416. *Satsari, Ghronicle* IV: 263, pp. 136-138.

The *Satsari* which is primarily a political text, shys away from lengthy discussion on trade and commerce which were not considered matters of royal enterprise. However, a few references allude to the important role of trade in the Tai-Ahom economy. In the reign of Swargadeo Pratap Singha, after the Tai-ahoms defeated the 'tribal' groups and the 'Bengali army', an estimate was made of the returns from 'sowing, trading and war booty. Tax was levied and this became the norm.'[417] From the *buranji* we learn that the royal administration kept a strict vigil on the trade passing through, and conducted within the kingdom. Traders had to live in identifiable communities along the river bank outside the capital complex. In the reign of Swargadeo Suklengmung, a mart was established on the banks of the Dihing in Namdang.[418] Swargadeo Pratap Singha opened a second mart on the banks of the Dikhou, outside the capital walls. Namdang and parts of Dikhou were renamed as Bhotiyapur,[419] and settled with traders who were encouraged to carry on brisk trade.[420] In one instance, the *buranji* mentions that as part of the settlement process, 'a reservoir was built where the Bhotiyas lived'.[421] These references, along with the extensive information available in British travel accounts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, help in delineating a picture of medieval Assamese commerce which was mostly manned by the 'tribal' groups.

Rudra Singha is said to have subjugated all the hill tribes and established extensive trade with Tibet.[422] The Tibetan traders came to Chouna and the traders from Assam halted at Geganshur. The main item of Tibetan trade was silver bullion and rock salt.[423] In the reign of Jayadhvaj Singha, the minting of coins was renewed since no coins were issued after Suklemung. In fact, the Assamese coins minted in the seventeenth century were of much greater purity than coins struck in other kingdoms of the time, including the Mughal coins. Probably this was done to attract traders who fixed the price

417. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 81, p. 29.
418. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 59, pp. 20-21.
419. The village of traders.
420. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 161, pp. 75-76.
421. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 185, p. 91.
422. Robinson, *Account of Assam*, p. 168; M'Cosh, *Topography*, p. 66.
423. M'Cosh, *Topography*, pp. 66-67. Silver was probably also procured from upper Burma and Bhutan. For details, see Tavernier, *Travels in India*, vol. ii, p. 212.

of their wares based on the purity of the coins, which was the accepted medium of exchange. A curious coin minted in the reign of Jayadhvaj Singha has a badly drawn Chinese inscription which reads as 'Tsang Pao'. Probably, this coin was minted for circulation among the Tibetan traders, who were already carrying brisk trade with the Tai-Ahom neighbours in Cooch Behar and Nepal. Rhodes, the present owner of this coin, is of the opinion that 'Jayadhvaj Simha's advisers happened to ask a Chinese man, perhaps the supplier of the silver, how to write an appropriate inscription' and therefore it was written in Chinese and not in Tibetan script.[424]

Besides the royal attempt at gaining control of the trading rights, many hill communities, like the Mishimis, were active traders and lived on the income generated through trade. The Mishimis inhabited the hills located north of Sadiya, extending into the frontiers of Tibet. Occasionally, they came to the plains to sell their commodities.[425] They carried on extensive trade with Tibet, exchanging musk, knives, spear-heads, iron cooking vessels, beads and pipes of Chinese manufacture. With Burma, they carried on trade of knives and slaves.[426]

The Abors who were another of the trading groups lived in the mountainous region between the Dihang and the Dibong rivers. The Abors, too, carried on extensive trade with the Tibetans.[427] South of the Abors were the Singhos, who maintained commercial relations with the Tai-Ahoms.[428] They inhabited both sides of the Patkai range. All these hill tribes maintianed regular trade with Bhutan. The chief commodity of trade were mountain horses sold in the plains, which made their way through Kamarupa to Lakhnauti (Bengal). The *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* mentions this.[429] A Tai-Ahom officer designated as *Barua* was posted at Chariduwar, near Darrang to facilitate the mutual exchanges between the Bhutias and the Tai-Ahoms.[430] The *Barua* collected a tax from all the traders

424. N.G. Rhodes, 'An Assamese Tibetan Coin', *Numismatic Circular*, July-August, 1975.
425. Cooper, *New Routes of Commerce*, p. 180; Shakespear, *History of Upper Assam*, p. 142.
426. Cooper, *New Routes*, pp. 180-183.
427. Shakespear, *History of Upper Assam*, p. 110.
428. Hamilton, *An Account of Assam*, p. 77.
429. Juzjani, *Tabakat*, vol, I, pp. 567-68.
430. In 1809 A.D., the annual trade between Bhutan and Assam amounted to Rs. 200,000. (Robinson, *Account of Assam*, p. 242).

who passed through the route. The Mishimis and the Daflas were important participants in this route.[431]

The Daflas had an unusual arrangment with the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo*. They levied *Posa* on the cultivators living in the plains of the upper Lauhitya valley.[432] It was some sort of revenue payment mostly taken in kind and was probably collected by force, rather than by consent, which caused an increase in tension between the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo* and the Daflas. The system of *Posa* continued even after Assam was occupied by the British. Jayadhvaj Singha tried to subdue the Daflas, but he failed.[433] In the eighteenth century, the Daflas joined the rebellious Vaishnava Muwamorias in an attempt to overthrow the political power of the Tai-Ahoms.[434]

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, trade between Assam and the overland regions of Burma and Tibet was brisk. Although it is difficult to find similar evidence in support of trading activities for the early period of the Tai-Ahom settlement, it is quite possible that the routes of communication were open and well utilized even then. It was through one of these passes that the Tai-Ahoms had entered the Lauhitya valley. After their settlement they maintained political relations with upland Burma, primarily with the Nara kingdom through these channels. Besides allowing for the exchange of envoys and gifts from one court to another, the routes provided access to some sort of trade. Elephant was one of the commodities traded directly by the *Swargadeo*. Elephant hunting and catching were royal prerogatives.[435] Throughout, it seems trade remained an important source of revenue for the Tai-Ahom kingdom, therefore, repeated attempts were made to subjugate the

431. Martin, *Eastern India*, pp. 661-62.
432. Shakespear, *History of Upper Assam*, p. 106. Also there are several government records on the *Posa* arrangement made with other hill tribes. (See, Series II-*Letters issued to the Government*, Guwahati: Assam State Achives).
433. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 268, pp. 139-140.
434. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 281, pp. 154-158.
435. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 23, pp. 8-9, I:93, p. 33; *Chronicle* III: 178 p. 85, III: 232, pp. 115-116; *Chronicle* V: 283-284, pp. 159-160, V: 288, p. 162, V: 299, pp. 167-168. Once, the Bhuyans were suspected of breaking the rule and keeping the captive elephants for themselves. As a punishment for the offence many Bhuyans were killed and a few were taken as hostage to Garhgaon (Ibid., *Chroncile* I: 71, p. 25).

'tribal' peoples controlling the crossroads trade between South, South-East and Inner Asia.

The Tai-Ahom rebellion against the Nara

In myth the Tai-Ahoms and the Naras share a common origin, at least the Tai-Ahoms represent themselves as Naras. The question is, who are the Naras? History is silent about these people, as well, at present there is no people, land or language which is called Nara.

In the Assamese language Nar(a) means a man. Its literal meaning is to be above one's head, implying a relational position of an overlord. Elias thinks that Naras were the aboriginal people with their early home in and about Khamti which was formerly divided into Ai-Kham in the north and Ai-Ton in the south. A variety of peoples lived in the Nara kingdom, of which some were Tai.[436] The Nara kingdom of Elias is co-extensive with the area mapped by L.W. Shakespear as the Nara domain of Mayankwan, situated in upper Chindwin in the Hukoong valley.[437] The kingdom of Mayankwan bordered the settlements of the Nagas of Patkai. This agrees with the mapping of the Nara domain done by Joseph Schwartzberg.[438] Hamilton Buchanan writes that 'through the Nara country flows a river called Dihing (Noa Dihing), into which the Luhit or Brahmaptura seems to have forced its way.'[439] P.K. Buragohain, an adventurous, twentieth century traveller who visited and lived in upper Burma for over nine years, had heard the 'historical gossip' from local peoples in the Hukoong valley that the Tai people had migrated from there with Hso-Ka-Hpa to Weh-sa-li or Assam.[440] The conjectures about a possible Nara kingdom cannot be verified since the Assamese narratives do not offer precise information regarding the origin and route followed by the Tai-Ahoms in their migration to Weh-sa-li. Also, the lack of a correct historical date of the Tai-Ahom migration has created problems in establishing the reasons why the exodus of entire villages had taken place, westward to the Lauhitya valley. Perhaps,

436. Elias, *Introductory Sketch*, p. 39.
437. Shakespear, *History of Upper Assam*, p. 34.
438. J. Schwartzberg, ed. *A Historical Altas of South Asia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 44.
439. Hamilton, *An Account of Assam*, pp. 78-79.
440. See his articles in *Awahan*, saka 1858, vol. vii.

it can never be established, it is one of the many enigmas of the Tai-Ahom history.

The Naras emerged in the Lauhitya valley in dialectical opposition and representation of the 'Ahom self' and 'other'. From narratives we learn that from Songtok in upper Assam, Sukapha sent his ambassador to the Nara court seeking political recognition as a subsidiary lord, which was duly granted. This allowed Sukapha to become a *Tyaolung* of the region. The passage to lordship was symbolized by performing bloody sacrifices and making ritualistic offerings of gold and silver to the mountain god.[441] The relation between lord and overlord, that is between the Tai-Ahom *Tyao* and the Nara king was maintained for some time. The expending socio-economic base of the Tai-Ahom *Tyao* caused alram for the Nara king who took the offensive to gain political control of the Lauhitya valley.[442] Meanwhile, in Burma, 'the king of Mantara' decisively defeated the Naras.[443] In an attmpt to revive his position as the overlord of the Tai-Ahoms, the Nara king demanded the gift of a Tai-Ahom princess. Tyao Subinpha (1493-1497) sent a variety of presents, but refused to give a woman. This led to war between the two groups and peace was finally concluded after the Tai-Ahom king agreed to share his domain and power with a Nara prince, who was appointed as the chief of the upper reaches of the Lauhitya valley.

However, not long after, in the reign of Dihingiya Raja (Subinpha's successor), the Tai-Ahoms got a new lease to life after the grand victory against the Chutias. The Tai-Ahoms, who had until then looked outward to the Nara king for political acceptance within a mandala were now ready to severe that dependent relationship. An overlord became an anomaly. New political alliances were formed in the Lauhitya valley and the various Tai peoples settled in the region came within the sphere of the newly established Tai-Ahom polity. The *Swargadeo* was recognized as the new overlord. To symbolize the creation of a new mandala, the *Swargadeo* presented to his officers royal gifts similar to those which his ancestors had received from the Nara overlord.[444] The

441. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 117, p. 48.
442. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 124, pp. 51-52.
443. *Satsari, Chronicle* I:62, pp. 21-22.
444. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 135, pp. 51-52.

Naras made several attempts to regain the Tai-Ahom domain and assert the rights of an overlord. But they could not achieve their goal.[445]

The Koches of Western Assam

On the western limit of Assam was the Koch kingdom which served as a buffer between the 'Bengalis' and the Tai-Ahoms.[446] In the late-fifteenth century, they eclipsed the power of Kamata/ Kamarud and became the most important rulers on the western edge of Assam. The expansionist policy of the Tai-Ahoms led them to clash with the Koches. The *Tabakat* mentions the Koch, as one of the three groups of people inhabiting the region between 'Tibbat and the country of Lakhnawati... one called the Kunch, the second Mej and the third the Tiharu.'[447] In 1205 A.D., Muhammad Bakhtiyar, the Khalji invader, was assisted by Ali, the chief of the Kunch (Koch) and the Mej, in his ambitious, though unsuccessful, design to invade the 'country of Turkistan and Tibbat'.[448]

The earliest reference to the Koches in the *Satsari* occurs within the context of an alliance made between the Tai-Ahom king, Dihingiya Raja and the king of Kamata. In the reign of Dihingiya Raja (1497-1539), Kamata sought for Tai-Ahom assistance to fight the 'Bengali, army, which was supposedly led by General Turbak, and the combined army succesfully defeated the invaders. In appreciation, the king of Kamata sent 'a princess as a gift to the Tai-Ahom king and also ceded to him the revenue of five villages near Chariduwar.... On this occasion, the Koch chief, Vishwa Singh came to visit the Garhgaoyan Raja and paid him tribute. He also asked to be taken as a protege. Garhgaoyan Raja assigned him the administration and revenue of Kamarupa and Thekara.'[449]

The Koch position of vassalage to the Tai-Ahoms was soon to change. After Naranarayan became the Koch king, his brother, Sila

445. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 281, pp. 154-158.
446. In the *buranji*, the Koch kingdom is loosely referred to as the successor kingdom of Kamata. According to S.L. Baruah, the kingdom of Kamata and the Koch kingdom were different, but they shared a common capital at Kamatpur (S.L. Baruah, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1985, pp. 37-38).
447. Jujzani, *Tabakat*, vol. 1, p. 560.
448. Jujzani *Tabakat*, vol. 1, pp. 560-61.
449. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 146, p. 70.

Rai, invited the brahmans of the kingdom and asked them to help him in regaining back the Koch autonomy. He accepted the suggestions of Shankar, who later became the leader of the Assamese Bhakti movement known as Vaishnavism. Sila Rai's campaign (1562) against the Tai-Ahom kingdom was a splendid success and he occupied the capital complex of Garhgaon. Swargadeo Sukhampha fled to Saraikhrung, from where he tried to negotiate peace. It was agreed that the Tai-Ahoms would pay one lakh pieces of silver annually to the Koch king.[450] The position between the two contending rivals, thus, changed dramatically. Now, it was the Tai-Ahoms who became vassals of the Koches. Tributes of elephants, gold and silver were sent to the Koch kingdom by the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo*.

Soon after Pratap Singha ascended to the throne, the Koch king became anxious to renew his friendship with the Tai-Ahoms. Sila Rai sent a letter requesting to remedy the age-old friendship between the Koches and the Tai-Ahoms and gifted a 'maiden to serve the *Swargadeo*'. However, the *Swargadeo* desired something quite different from the traditional articles of gift. He wanted the brahmans of the Koch kingdom. This request was fulfilled and fifteen brahman families were sent from the Koch kingdom who were re-settled in the Tai-Ahom capital, in Garhgaon. Thereupon, in the royal court the Tai-Ahom *kotokis* were replaced by the highly competent, imported brahman *kotokis*.[451] A male member from each of the fifteen relocated brahman households was appointed as a *kotoki*.[452] From then on, according to the *Satsari*, the process of brahmanization of the Tai-Ahom royalty started in full earnest and this aspect later became the most significant element in the Tai-Ahom polity.

The Tai-Ahom culture and polity at this juncture changed its course, leaning more heavily towards Indic connections. The fluid society of the earlier times which allowed for easy exchanges at various levels with indigenous, as well as, the South-East and Inner Asain peoples and cultures became restricted. The new emphasis was on the grand style of the Brahmanic royal rituals and traditions.

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450. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 155, p. 73.
451. They were the ambassadors sent on official missions to represent the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo* in the foreign courts.
452. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 159-160, pp. 74-75.

In this instance, the Koch culture and polity significantly influenced the evolution of an Indianized Tai-Ahom culture and polity in the Lauhitya valley. Brahmanization became the symbol of the Tai-Ahom royalty, and slowly penetrated the lower levels of the administrative circles. At the time of the demise of the Ahom kingdom, the British, who were the political successors, found that Brahmanism was the salient cultural element of the Assamese society.

The Tai-Ahom relation with the 'Bengalis'

In the *buranjis* the term 'Bengali' is used to denote all groups of peoples who lived or came from outside the western limit of Assam. Its specific use was for Muslims, which included the invaders from Bengal and also the Mughals of Delhi. In Assamese narrative accounts the emphasis is on the hostile exchanges which delineated the course of the Tai-Ahom and 'Bengali' relationship. Information concerning other levels of action, as well as inaction, is supressed, probably due to the historiographical limitations of writing an autonomous history of Assam. The Tai-Ahom and 'Bengali' encounters were not contained to military outposts, but Tai-Ahom art, architecture, dress and court customs borrowed heavily from the imperial Mughal style. The Mughal artisans and craftsmen captured in war, or later on, invited to the Tai-Ahom court introduced new methods and materials of building. The wood and bamboo constructions of the Tai-Ahom made way for the longer lasting and imposing masonry structures.[453] The opening of Assam to westward influences initiated by the Koches through its export of brahmans was further strengthened by the employment of *Farsi parhiyas* from among the 'Bengalis'.[454] Above all, the Tai-Ahom army was re-organised with the incorporation of 'Bengali' artillery men. They were designated as *hiloi dharias* and were settled in a *khel*.[455]

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453. For details concering the influence of the Mughals/Muslims in generating a new style of architecture in Assam see Sharma's, *Architecture.*
454. They were the Persian language experts and were invited and settled with revenue free land grants in Assam in order to facilitate royal exchanges with the courts of the Indian rajas and princes. The early British exchanges were also in the Persian language.
455. *Hiloi dharia* is to 'hold a cannon'. The infrastucture of the Tai-Ahom administrative system was the *khel.* It was a group of men following the same occupation under the command of an officer. The *Swargadeo* decided the occupational affiliation of his subjects.

The influence of the religion of the 'Bengalis', that is Islam, did not penetrate the royal circles. Its appeal was more at the level of masses fostered through the activities of the adventurous sufis who came to the Lauhitya valley on their own calling. There is no sufi *silsia* or *khanqah* in Assam. But the legends of Azam Pir, the sufi at Garhgaon, still abound and many believe he was the real force in the dissemination of Islam in the valley. Above all the Tai-Ahom and 'Bengali' relation was determined by the economic needs of the time. The Muslim interest was to secure the resources of Assam, the highly valued commodities of gold, elephants, agar (aloe) wood, and pepper.[456] Equally, they hoped to gain access to the trans-Himalayan trade passing through Assam.[457]

Muslim campaigns into Assam started as early as 1206 under the command of the Ghorid, Bakhtiyar Khalji. After many campaigns and three hundred years of confrontation on the western front it appears from Assam narrative accounts that in 1532 the Muslim army under General Turbak penetrated into the upper Lauhitya valley. The General was killed and the 'Bengalis' were driven away. In the reign of Pratap Singha, the 'Bengalis' occupied the Koch kingdom which caused great alarm in the Tai-Ahom kingdom. Tension erupted when a Mughal trader named Ratan Shah was detected to be illegally trading in the Tai-Ahom domain and Swargadeo Pratap Singha sent his men to capture the intruder, who fled to the 'Bengali' camp.[458] In the naval engagement that followed, the Mughals won and occupied the outpost of Dhubri, where Sattrajit was appointed as the Mughal *Thanadar*.[459] Realizing the hoplessness of direct confrontation, Swargadeo

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456. In 1661, Glanius, a Dutch mercenary who accompanied Mir Jumla in his Assam campaign, noted that 'the mountains of Assam yield pepper, agar wood, sanders, and simples, that are sold for their weight in gold. As to this material 'tis not scarce; and elephants are so common.' (Glanius, *A Relation of an unfortunate voyage to the Kingdom of Bengala*, London, 1682, pp. 162-63). The French traveller, Jean Baptiste Tavernier, also alluded to the availability of gold and silver in Assam (Tavernier, *Travels*, vol. ii, pp. 220-21). Also see, *Tabakat* for similar references to gold in Assam (Jujzani, *Tabakat*, vol. II, pp. 764-65).

457. When Mir Jumla, the Mughal commander of Aurangzeb, entered the Tai-Ahom capital city, Garhgaon (1661), he wrote to the Emperor boasting that he has opened the way to reach China, and that he would be able to plant the Mughal flag in Peking the very next year (Robinson, *Account of Assam*, p. 165).

458. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 168, p. 80.

459. Officer in-charge of the outpost. It was both a civil and military posting.

Pratap Singha attempted to cultivate friendly relation with Sattrajit while he encouraged the deposed Koch king, Chandra Narayan, to regain his lost domains from the Mughals in Darrang. The 'Bengali' population settled in Darrang was massacred and Mughal trade in those regions was thoroughly disrupted.[460]

Thereafter, in 1636, an imperial force was deputed by the Bengal Nawab, Islam Khan, to repair the damages and regain control of the Mughal trade in Assam. Mirza Zainuddin sent word to the Tai-Ahom ambassador, that 'if you give us the right to pan gold from your rivers, catch elephants in your jungles, and collect agar wood and pepper from your forests, we will not fight you'.[461] After making necessary preparations the Tai-Ahoms gave battle to the 'Bengalis', defeated and forced them to retreat as far west as the Manas river. Guwahati was occupied by the *Swargadeo's* men.

Renewed attacks by the 'Bengalis' devastated the Tai-Ahom kingdom. In 1661, Nawab Mir Jumla occupied Hajo, repossessed Guwahati and marched to the Tai-Ahom capital, Garhgaon. Swargadeo Jayadhvaj Singha fled to the remote region of Namrup,[462] and the Mughals occupied the captail complex. Many Tai-Ahom officers joined the imperial 'Bengali' army. After months of waiting, peace was negotiated between the two sides[463] and the 'Bengalis' assured they would return to their domain if five lakh of silver and ninety elephants were paid as tribute.[464] Glanius, a Dutch mercenary who wrote an eye witness account, noted that the Mughal commander agreed to give up the siege of Garhgaon if the *Swargadeo* gave 'half of his kingdom, and the youngest daughter for

460. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 175, pp. 83-84.
461. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 179, pp. 85-86.
462. Glanius says that he fled to the mountains of Lhasa (Glanius, *Voyage to Bengala*, p. 181). This is not improbable since there was a direct trade route between Assam and Tibet (M'Cosh, *Topography*, p. 10).
463. The Tai-Ahom officer deputed to conduct the negotiations was one Sultan Gariya. Gariya in the Assamese language is used to refer to Muslims who were Assamized through association and assimilation with the various local people of Assam. Due to the on-going, though hostile interaction between the Tai-Ahoms and the 'Bengalis', many Muslims had settled in the Lauhitya valley and taken up employement in the Tai-Ahom administration. My family ancestry in Assam derives from this time. In 1604, my great-great grandfather, Sheikh Azimuddin came from Delhi and initially settled in Rangamatti, now Jorhat district. His grandson Sheikh Kailam who married an Ahom noble woman entered the *Swargadeo's* service and was honoured with the title of *Saikia*.
464. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 190, pp. 91-92.

his concubine, two thousand elephants, some millions of ready money, and his richest vessels full of excellent roots, with which this country abounded and which were of inestimable value'.[465] Mir Jumla threatened to attack Namrup if the tribute was not paid.[466]

Even before the payment of this exorbitant tribute could be arranged, Mir Jumla ordered his men to unearth the tombs of the *Swargadeos* at Charaideo.[467] Vast amounts of treasure were found, which he carried away with him.[468] Glanius remarks, 'As for riches we wanted them not, having found store in the graves.'[469] The Mughals left Assam, and the *Swargadeo* returned to his capital. Although the imperial aspiration of acquiring control of the trans-Himalayn routes was not fulfilled, the prolonged campaign was a political and economic success for the 'Bengalis'. The Mughal Badshah, Aurangzeb, gifted a *Sarapa* to the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo*. *Sarapa* is Persian for *Khil'at*, which is a 'robe of honour'. Here clothing is the symbolic representation of the donor including the recepient within his own person.[470] The acceptance of this robe of honour indicated an act of homage and acknowledgement of Mughal suzerainty. The Tai-Ahom king bemoaned that since 'none of my ancestors had been subordinate to anyone, I cannot be made a vassal and wear the robe of vassalage'.[471] His refusal to accept the overlorship of the Mughal emperor gave a new reason for the renewal of hostilities between the Tai-Ahoms and the Mughals.

In 1668, Ram Singh led an imperial army against Assam. This campaign failed, but the Nawab of Bengal, Azamtara, continued to interfere in the internal politics of Assam. Swargadeo Rudra Singha decided to make a last, desperate attempt to settle his scores with

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465. Glanius, *Voyage to Bengala*, pp. 174-175; *Satsari, Chronicle* V: 291, p. 164.
466. The importance of Namrup lay in its strategic position connecting Assam with Tibet and further to Inner Asia which was the route for long distance, overland trade. (*Satsari, Chronicle* V: 291, p. 164).
467. The Tai-Ahoms buried their royality and their practise is known as making a *maidam*. An officer called *Changrung Phukan* was in-charge of building and maintianing the *maidams*.
468. Glanius, *Voyage to Bengala*, p. 176; Tavernier, *Travels*, vol. ii, p. 219; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 160-62.
469. Glanius, *Voyage to Bengala*, p. 175.
470. C.W. Buckler, Legitimacy and Symbols: The South Asian Writings of F.W. Buckler, ed. M.N. Pearson, *The Oriental Despot* (Michigan: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), p. 241.
471. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 192, pp. 92-93.

the Mughal Badshah. He appealed to other Indian rajas to assist him in overthrowing the Mugal Emperor.[472] This strategy, however, never went beyond the stages of planning. In 1714, Rudra Singha died and the plan was abandoned soon after.

To sum it, the early semi-nomadic Tai-Ahoms were one among the many groups which provided a human bridge of contact and exchanges for peoples and cultures spanning the divide of South, South-East and Inner Asia. On settling in the Lauhitya valley, they were exposed to a variety of peoples and traditions, the interaction through trade, warfare and religion provided the initial basis for the new peoples to develop a self-image. At this early stage differentiation was not emphasized, rather in an attempt to acquire social legitimacy they absorbed the myths and legends of the separate ethnic communities in the wide area and constructed new linkages to their past. Their present identity was, thus, projected into a past according to the conditions and requirements of a diversity of peoples. In this way they forged social acceptance and merged with the cultures and societies of the Lauhitya valley. The mythical Naras of upper Burma became Tai-Ahoms, the name given to them by the Morans and the Barahis, their first subjects in the Lauhitya valley. Immediately after their settlement, the first feud occurred with the Kacharis. The bone of contention was the fertile banks of the Dikhou river, which both groups needed for their survival as agricultural peoples. From the Chutias, the Tai-Ahoms appropriated a ready-made royal culture and the personnel needed for the management of a newly developing administrative system. At this point, they asserted their separation from the parent Nara kingdom, while their local identity as Tai-Ahoms was emphasized in carving out a separate political kingdom. A number of tribal trading communities connected the highway of Assam with the overland commercial networks. These groups were incorporated into the emerging Tai-Ahom polity through various means of concession and coercion.

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472. In one chronicle it is recounted that Rudra Singha planned to invade Dacca and extend the boundary of the Tai-Ahom kingdom to that region (*Satsari, Chronicle* III: 247, pp. 124-125). But in *Chronicle* IV of the *Satsari*, it is said that Rudra Singha made appeals to the Raja of Amber and (Koch) Behar to help him sack Delhi (*Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 276, pp. 149-151). In either case, the aim of the Swargadeo was to shake off the Mughal suzerainty imposed on the Tai-Ahoms since Mir Jumla's invasion.

The Tai-ahom alliance with the Jaiantias opened new religious dimensions for the royal household. The beginning process of Brahmanization was accelerated after the Tai-Ahoms allied themselves with the Koches of western Assam, and acquired a group of brahmans from them. These brahmans replaced the unsophisticated, inept local officers. The work of the migrant brahmans extended beyond the court circle. They became the religious teachers of the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeos*, and finally brought the kings to impose their religion on the populace. The open, fluid societies and cultures of the crossroads were thus transformed into a somewhat homogeneous society and polity. The new polity was structured and controlled by the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeos* guided by an army of brahman ritual specialists.

Nonetheless, the geography retained its character of a crossroads allowing continuous migrations of peoples from regions of South-East Asia, until as late as the nineteenth century.[473] Culturally, Assam became the eastern frontier of Brahmanism in India. The Muslim campaigns into Assam, which started in the early-thirteenth century and continued until the late-seventeenth century opened up new channels of communication. Art, architecture, dress and court customs were stylised in the imperial Mughal fasion. The Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo* became the 'little Mughal in the east'. In the later eighteenth century when the British encountered the 'country of hills and forests, tenanted by a number of wild tribes, with whom no intercourse had ever been opened'[474] they concluded that the only people worth contending with for political power were the Tai-Ahoms, the rulers of the kingdom of Assam. When the British finally took over the administrative and economic control of Assam, the Tai-Ahoms were reduced to a (non) census category, and absorbed within the vast community called Assamese which was differentiated from the 'tribals'. The monolithic image of the Tai-Ahoms as one group, with one culture and one society is a misreading of the colonial administrators who meddled with academics as a 'worthwhile pastime'.

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473. The Khamtis and Singphos made their way to the eastern extremity of the valley in the eighteenth century and continued to migrate from Burma even in the nineteenth century.
474. *Early British Relations with Assam*, A1/vol. 2, S.K. Bhuyan Library, Guwahati.

PART III

The Tai-Ahom Society and Polity: Royal Style in the Lauhitya valley

The *Swargadeo* was the metaphor of the Tai-Ahom Society and polity. The institution of the Tai-Ahom royalty was the most dominant metaphor, consciously articulated then and even now, both in folk and informed literary discourse on the Tai-Ahom self. In the *buranjis* the creative actions of the *Swargadeos* alone are accounted for. The lives and activities of common men and women are of no consequence. The presentation of the Ahom-self as royal has dual meaning: on the one hand it is 'Tai-Ahom is a royal culture' differentiated from the 'tribal other' and 'Tai-Ahoms alone have the right to rule', one premise supports the other. Through the passage of history in 'becoming' Tai-Ahom, the institution of monachry, like its subject groups, had continuously undergone changes in encountering and exchanging goods, fighting battles and borrowing religion and culture from its neighbours. A multiplicity of royal codes and conduct were generated through opposition and exchange. This chapter will concern the process how these symbols of royality, some borrowed, while some were indigenous to Assam, were adapted and assimilated in the Tai-Ahom society. It was natural for a crossroads society to include in its royal culture several customs and traditions, however, it is both intresting and essential to locate how some of these modes became dominant over the others. In the Lauhitya valley, finally in the contest of supremacy, the brahmans and the brahmanic culture became the conspicious and essential elements in the cult of the *Swargadeo*. This chapter will focus on the process of brahmanic penetration into the Tai-Ahom court culture.

The political history of the Tai-Ahoms began in the Lauhitya valley. In 'mythic-history' these people were Naras. When a history of these people emerged they became known as the 'Ahoms', a new group, with a newly constructed genealogy. They asserted their independence by severing their political linkages with Upper Burma. The Tai-Ahom self image although synthetically

constructed was presented as 'genuine and authentically' royal, and the activities of the leader and his coterie were manipulated to serve as the window of royal representation. The Tai-Ahom royalty, indigenous narratives tell us, was retrospectively constructed. At the crossroads of Assam, indigenous peoples and societies exposed to a variety of symbols and institutions, icons and their representations chose to incorporate some, sometimes doing it consciously or otherwise without understanding and interpreting their meanings. Alongside, the process of 'integration and assimilation', a text society emerged in the crossroads of Assam. The past was re-thought and re-captured in narrative styles. In this, the *Swargadeo* emerged as the dominant symbol of the crossroads culture.

Emergence of a Polity

Water for 'us'

The *Satsari Buranji* is not an exhaustive chronicle providing snapshots of each and every aspect of the Tai-Ahom society. Certain landmarks of the history of the Assamese crossroads is considered in this narrative, which allow us to draw a skeletal framework of the process of political emergence of the Tai-Ahom monarchy and its institutions of administration. I have tried to avoid writing a chronological account of this process, but have emphasized the agents which generated and guided the contours of the Tai-Ahom royal culture.

A number of symbols were used in representing the Tai-Ahom concept of a space, in other words, the Tai-Ahom land. It was not a geographical space, but a conceptual arena in which a number of peoples sharing a common culture reigned supreme. Natural objects and categories like rivers, forests, hills, seasons and so on were encoded with special meanings and used as tools to draw the limits of 'our' culture as opposed to 'their' culture. Water and water bodies were deemed most sacred and pure. The unique importance of water in the Tai-Ahom culture was made evident at the time of contracting a pact or making a pledge. The norm was to immerse the hands of the alliance making partners in water and make a

solemn promise which was binding on both the parties thereafter.[475]

Rivers and large streams sometimes delineated the imaginary boundaries of the Tai-Ahom political space from the realm of others, their rivals in power. When the Tai-Ahoms won their first victory against the army of Bengal (1532), they commemorated the event by digging a pond on the banks of the Karotaya river, in western Assam. A gold pillar erected on the site read: 'Anyone who claims this territory as his without giving battle is cursed to loose his parents and his ancestors to hell... such a man should dress in woman's clothing.'[476] In vying with the Kacharis, the Tai-Ahoms also built a vast waterworks system. However, in monsoon Assam, the state's control over the water-system was not so established as to create a despotic hydraulic society. The digging of ponds, building reservoirs and dams throughout the kingdom became almost a religious duty of the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeos*. Generally, ponds were located near the *dauls*. Some ponds were made in memory of kings, queens and ministers. Constructing a pond symbolised victory in war, it was also built to supply drinking water for the public, to soak the rice sapplings before planting, to wash the farming implements, to raise fish, to enjoy boating competition, and for many other activities.[477] An officer designated as *Bar Barua* was in charge of digging ponds. The ponds were generally square in shape facing northward and those meant for public use were enclosed by embankments. Large ponds were consecrated by brahmans and were referred to as *sagar* meaning 'sea'.

The Dikhou river in upper Assam was the life-line of the Tai-Ahom domain. The Dikhou delineated the eastern boundary

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475. On the occasion of a contract drawn between the Tai-Ahom nobles and Tyao Susang, the parties cemented the alliance by immersing their hands in the newly dug pond (*Satsari, Chronicle* I: 29, p. 10). Again, although there was a disagreement between the Dihingiya Raja and his son, Garhgaonyan Raja, a solemn promise was made not to give up the fight against the 'Bengalis'. This was cemented by immersing their hands in the Dihing river (*Satsari, Chronicle* I: 54, pp. 22-23). In 1440, when an alliance was made with the Aakhampha Nagas both parties pledged themselves by immersing their hands in water (*Satsari, Chronicle* II: 128, pp. 54-55). Water was used as a medium to forge links and establish relationships between the Tai-Ahoms and the other groups.
476. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 50, pp. 16-17.
477. P. Borgohain, 'Tai-Ahombakalar Pukhuri Khanda Pranali aru Utsav kara Niyam', pp. 397-403, in *Tai Sanskriti*, ed. P. Gogoi (Dhemaji: Wan Ok Public Muang Tai, 1994), p. 397.

separating the settled agrarian peoples of the valley from the 'tribal' Nagas and the recalcitrant trading communities of upper Assam.[478] The Manas river formed the western boundary demarcating the Tai-Ahom kingdom from the land of the foreigners or the 'Bengalis'.[479]

The Trinity

The emerging Tai-Ahom polity needed some cultural categories to bring together the heterogenous groups within one body of a collective self. In the contest of the many symbols and their modes of representation **a.** the *Tyao*, **b.** the *hengdan*, and **c.** the *capital* became the most dominant categories in the emerging Tai-Ahom polity. Later, elephants also became an integral emblem of the Tai-Ahom royal culture. When Sukapha migrated from the Nara land he neither had an office nor a designation. According to the second chronicle of the *Satsari*, eleven 'good men' accompanied Sukapha on his westward migration.[480] Different sources quote different numbers.[481] Additionally two nobles came with him. The nobles together with the 'good men' formed the embryonic aristocracy, this core group was designated as 'Ahoms' by others such as the Morans and the Barahis. The two nobles were designated one as *Thawmung*, known as *Bar Gohain* in the Assamese language, and another as *Thawphrangmung*, which in Assamese translates as *Bura Gohain*. These officers were selected even before the *Tyao* had formally assumed his office as the ruler of the community. The two nobles, the *Bar Gohain* and the *Bura Gohain*, were allowed to have an elephant each which differentiated them from the lower level officer and the subject population.[482] These offices were not hereditary, but it appears that the *Tyao* could choose his Gohains from among the male members of these two families only.

It was implicit in Sukapha's personality and in his enterprise that he was the *Tyao* of his peoples. After the Tai-Ahoms settled in the Lauhitya valley, they chose their *Tyao* with the blessings of the Nara king. During the early phase of settlement there was no

478. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 58. p.20.
479. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 179, pp. 85-86, III: 195, pp. 94-95, III: 247, p. 124-125.
480. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 114, pp. 45-46.
481. It is generally accepted that seven families came to the Lauhitya valley with Sukapha (*Assam Buranji*, Ms. 59; *Assam Buranji*, Goswami).
482. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 23, pp. 8-9.

defined rule or succession to the position of *Tyao*. At times, it took years before a *Tyao* could be chosen by the core group.[483] In one instance, a Khuntai desired to be the *Tyao*. But he was unacceptable to the nobles, who traveled north, probably to the Chutia kingdom, where they found Sudang, a Tai masquerading as a brahman.[484] This man agreed to be the Tai-Ahom *Tyao*, provided his brahman foster brothers and father were also welcome in the Tai-Ahom domain and given important administrative offices. The Tai-Ahoms elected the *Brahman konwar* as their *Tyao*, expecting that this move would fulfill a twofold purpose - a. Sudang, trained in a brahman household could provide a sophisticated administration to the fledging Tai-Ahom polity, and b. an able *Tyao* will generate awe and service of the indigenous peoples and thus provide greater political legitimacy to the Tai-Ahom polity which was one of the many communities vying for the dominant ruling position in the valley.[485]

After nearly three centuries of very slow progress, with many ebbs and flows in the direction of establishing a polity, in the early sixteenth century, the Tai-Ahoms had their first breakthrough in the contest for political power. After defeating the Chutias and ousting their king from the capital, the Tai-Ahoms amassed the Chutia royal symbols and articles. Many of these objects were appropriated and retrospectively indigenized as the Tai-Ahom royal symbols. The Tai-Ahom *Tyao* transformed with the objects of the Chutia royalty promoted a new image as a *Swargadeo*, and kingship was raised to sacral heights. New imperial offices and titles were also created. Many new *Tyaos* were appointed as subordinate to the *Swargadeo*. A demarcation was drawn between the settled, civilised 'Ahom' people and their land - the domain of the *Swargadeo*, and the uninhabitable forest lands where the semi-civilised 'tribal' peoples lived. The new effort was to clear the forest lands in the interface region and settle new peoples under the political control of the *Swargadeo*.

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483. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 27, 32, pp. 9, 11; *Chronicle* II: 122-124, pp. 51-52.
484. Ahom scholars argue that this information is not available in the Ahom language *buranji*, but is an interpolation found only to the Assamese *buranjis*. Since, here we are mainly concerned with the exposition of the Satsari, I have drawn upon the information available in this source.
485. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 32, p. 11.

In the story of origins, the first *hengdan*, or sacred sword, was presented to the god-sons Khun Lung and Khun Lai by Jasinghpha, the goddess of the early Tai-Ahoms.[486] It is interesting and also perplexing to note that the Kacharis too claim a similar sacred symbol called *Rana Chandi* in their royal past which was bestowed on one Raja Nirbhar by the Mother Goddess.[487] Besides the Kacharis, the Moran chief in the Lauhitya valley also possessed a sword that symbolized his power over the community.[488] Outside the Lauhitya valley, in the kingdom of Sukhothai, especially in the reign of Lu Tai, the royal regalia comprised the crown, the white umbrella, and the sacred sword, *Jayasri*.[489] These regalia were presented to the king by the provincial governors of the outlying muangs.[490] The *hengdan* in the Tai-Ahom society was intimately connected with royal culture. Each of the two *Gohains* received a *hengdan* from the *Tyao* which marked them as somewhat different, as well, made them the distinguished members of the polity. In emphasizing the uniqueness of the *hengdan*, the *Satsari Buranji* recounts a story of Sukapha's *Bura Gohain* who, after having lost his way enroute to the Lauhitya valley, was befriended by the Morans with whom he lived and died. His son inherited his *hengdan* which he always carried in his person. Many years later, king Susang saw this and on making inquiries found out the parentage of this young man who was very soon appointed as the *Bura Gohain* of the domain.[491]

In the South-East Asian tradition, a similar homology between sword and nobility is evident in Malay royal culture. The *Satsari Buranji* recounts, 'Suhungmung declared himself *Swargadeo* and sat on the royal chair. On this occasion, he gave *hengdans* to his ministers.'[492] An 'Ahom' who received the royal gift of a *hengdan* was literally transformed from a common man to an aristocrat.

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486. *Ahom Buranji*, Barua (Guwahati : Spectrum Publication, 1985).
487. For details, see Gohain, *Human Sacrifice*, p. 11; also S. Miri, ed. *Religion and Society in North East India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978), p. 104.
488. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 30, p. 10.
489. R.W. Andaya, 'Statecraft in the reign of Lu Tai of Sukhodaya (ca. 1347-1374)', in *Religion and Legitimation in Thailand, Laos and Burma*, ed. B.L. Smith (Pennysylvania: Anima Books, 1978), pp. 2-19.
490. B. Gosling, *Sukhothai, Its History, Culture and Art* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 65.
491. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 30, p. 10; *Assam Buranji*, Ms. 59.
492. *Satsari, Chronicle* II: 134, pp. 60-61.

When Swargadeo Jayadhvaj Singha appointed his father-in-law, a *Bar Phukan*, as his new *Bar Gohain*, the change in status was indicated by the presentation of a *hengdan*.[493] In this way he was transformed from an officer to a noble of the court. Besides the *Swargadeo*, his royal ministers and provincial lords, no one else in the kingdom could possess a *hengdan*. Sometimes *hengdans* were ceremoniously presented to each service group of the 'Ahoms'.[494] A special imperial officer called *Hengdandhara*[495] was responsible for the maintenance of these swords.[496] During wars with their rivals, the Tai-Ahoms ascertained the death of such-and-such a noble by checking his *hengdan* in the battlefield. In the battle fought against the Bengali army of General Turbak, 'twenty *hengdans* were lost.'[497]

At the initial stages of founding the Tai-Ahom polity, *hengdan* was the most distinctive and dominant symbol of the new community, it was both a personal and collective identity of the group. Giving and receiving a *hengdan* was an act of honour which conferred on the recipient great distinction and privileges. The eclipsing power of the *Tyao* made him the dominant metaphor of the Tai-Ahom society and culture, and the *hengdan* and elephant became added symbols in the construction of a powerful image of the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo* as the 'Kshatriya of the East'.

As the Tai-Ahoms evolved politically, it became necessary to have a centre, a locus of royal power, which manifested in the founding of capital cities. The polity was representative of the body of the *Swargadeo*, power was in the person of the king and wherever he resided the area was deemed the capital of the polity for as long as the *Swargadeo* ruled. Each *Swargadeo* chose his own capital, there was no fixed space which was considered inherently superior to be the centre of the kingdom. Tyao Sukapha annexed the sacred hill of the Barahis at Charaideo, and designated it as his capital.[498]

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493. To use a modern English analogy, the act of gifting a *hengdan* was to knight the person.
494. In the reign of Suhinpha (1383-1386) the Hatimuriya group or elephant keepers received a *hengdan* for their *khel*. Khura Raja (1498-1524) removed the *hengdan* presented to the people of *Rebati Gohain* gaon and gave it away to the *Bar Gohain's* men (*Assam Buranji*, Ms. 59).
495. The bearer or keeper of *hengdans*.
496. *Satsari, Chronicle* V: 300, pp. 168-169.
497. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 262, pp. 135-136.
498. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 16, p. 6; *Bhalukpang Raja*, B2/ABC-2.

On the ascension of the first *Swargadeo*, Suklengmung, Garhgaon was deemed as the Tai-Ahom capital.[499] It was enclosed on four sides and lion motif doors decorated the gates of the capital city.[500] Successive *Swargadeos* chose new sites for their capital. Swargadeo Rudra Singha established his capital at Meteka which was renamed Rangpur,[501] and later, Swargadeo Siva Singha built his capital in Sibsagar.[502] All these capital cities were on the banks of the Dikhou river. The *Swargadeo* as the icon of the Tai-Ahom polity was thus represented by a plethora of symbols and cultural categories in the capital city, as a means to further legitimize and glorify the Tai-Ahom polity.

Passage to kingship

By the late sixteenth century, the installation ceremony of a *Swargadeo* was highly formalized. It was an eleborate and lengthy affair, the ceremony being orchestrated to fine details to create awe and admiration in the ranks of the audience. At Dalguri, a massive wooden hall, called the *Singori Ghar*, was constructed for the specific purpose of the installation ceremony.[503] The *Swargadeo*-to-be entered the *Singori Ghar* seated on an elephant with the icon of Seng - the god of the Tai-Ahom royality - dangling from his neck. He and his queen were bathed with holy water while the three tiered lion motif throne was arranged in the *Hulung*. The three platforms were draped with special cloths of red, black, and yellow colour.[504] The *Bura Gohain* stood beside the first platform, the *Bar Gohain* beside the second, and the *Bar Patra* near the third. The *Swargadeo* elect ascended the lion-motif throne in the *Hulung Ghar* facing east, a gesture which symbolised a complete break from the past from the Nara kingdom located east of the Tai-Ahoms. Kettledrums and bugles were then sounded. The installation

499. Garhgaon was also known as Garhgram (*Satsari, Chronicle* I: 58, p. 20).
500. The architectural remains of Sukhothai also depict the use of the lion motif in royal buildings (Gosling, *Sukhothai*, p. 84).
501. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 237, p. 118.
502. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 253, p. 127.
503. In Tai this is called Rung-mai-ko.
504. These were designated as royal colours after the Tai-Ahoms confiscated the Chutia throne which was made of these three colours (*Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 262, pp. 135-36).

ceremony of a *Swargadeo* was a guarded activity attended only by the three royal ministers and three Tai-Ahom *deodhais* who literally raised the new Swargadeo to the throne.[505]

The rite of passage to kingship symbolically transformed a human prince to a semi-divine ruler. The *Swargadeo* was above all others in the polity, in theory he was 'spirit of heaven', who had descended to the earth in a human form to administer a just and good government for the Tai-Ahoms, the divinely destined people.[506] On becoming a *Swargadeo*, he was invested with new rights and duties. His first task was to make a ceremonial inspection of the royal granaries and bless them so that abundance and prosperity reigned the kingdom during his rule.[507] Then he received his three ministers and the various imperial officers, who swore allegiance by bowing nine times before him. Gold, silver and other gifts were distributed on the occasion.

An essential ritual of the installation ceremony was the sacrifice made to the gods. Initially, human beings were sacrificed for this purpose,[508] which was replaced with the sacrifice of a white bull in the installation ceremony of Rudra Singha. The passage to a new life and responsibilities of a *Swargadeo* was given further accent during the later period of the Tai-Ahom rule. The tradition of taking a Hindu name at the time of the installation ceremony became the norm. Also, on the occasion of the enthronement ceremony, the *Swargadeo* put on garments fashioned in the 'Bengali' style.[509] Swargado Rudra Singha much to the dismay of his ministers donned the 'Bengali' garments during his installation ceremony. Later, he presented similar outfits to his ministers and since then the dress code in the Tai-Ahom court was thoroughly changed.[510] To commemorate the ascension to the throne, the *Swargadeo* planted a special tree in the capital. Octagonal coins of

505. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 131-33.
506. In the Indic tradition a parallel institution is the Devaraja cult.
507. In South-East Asia the first ploughing of the season is done by the reigning king. In principle the same motive guided the ceremonial inspection of the granaries by the newly installed *Swargadeo*.
508. On the occasion of the enthronement ceremony of Swargadeo Surampha (1641-1644), 'in the presence of his Gohains, Ranga Phukan was sacrificed'. (*Satsari, Chronicle* I: 83, p. 29).
509. In the buranji it is called Jama-Ijar (*Satsari, Chronicle* III: 240, pp. 119-20).
510. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 240, pp. 119-20.

gold and silver were issued. From the reign of Gadadhar Singha, it became common to write the new *Swargadeo's* name on a golden cloth which was then revealed to the general public and sent to ambassadors in different regions and to the royal courts.[511] For seven days there was merry making in the kingdom and the new *Swargadeo* usually distributed various gifts to the ministers. Gold and silver were given in charity to brahmans, paiks received twenty takka each, and the general public received a measure of precious salt and rice.[512] On the eighth day, the *Swargadeo* came out of the *Singori Ghar* seated in his royal dula. Holding a white *aruwan*, he went to the temple of his ancestors at Charaideo, where he offered prayers and re-placed the icon of Seng.[513] After that, the public could have an audience with him at his royal palace called the *Kareng Ghar*.[514]

Once again, like the other symbols of the Tai-Ahom polity and society the installation ceremony marking the passage to kingship was an expression of the 'coming together' of crossroads customs and traditions at the juncture of the Tai-Ahom polity. The concept of a throne and enthronement hall were possibly Indic borrowings, but the regalia which accompanied them, the lion motif, white umbrella, bull sacrifice, ancestor worship, planting a tree, etc., were cultural categories of the South-East Asian Buddhistic people. Islamic influence penetrated much later but was highly visible in the grand royal attire. The hallmark of the transformed Tai-Ahom polity was the creation of a godlike figure, a *Swargadeo*. He displayed in his person and in his office all the elements which went in the making of the Tai-Ahom culture. Many of these symbols were borrowed from a variety of sources whose meanings were not interpreted nor the interrelationship between them understood. Nonetheless, at the 'crossroads of civilization', the *Swargadeo* represented the encounters of the systems and societies, their customs and behaviours, and brought the heteregenous peoples under one political umbrella, called the Tai-Ahom kingdom of Assam.

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511. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 225, p. 110.
512. *Satsari, Chronicle* V: 282, p. 159.
513. This practice was followed by all Swargadeos. Even Siva Singha, a staunch supporter of brahmanism abided by this tradition (*Satsari, Chronicle* III: 254, pp. 127-28).
514. In the Tai language it is Rung ka, literally 'dance house'.

The nobles of the Tai-Ahom polity

The eleven 'good men' and the two imperial officers, the *Bar Gohain* and the *Bura Gohain*, who accompanied Sukapha on his westward journey to the Lauhitya valley, formed the core group of the Tai-Ahom nobility. Each of these men received a *hengdan*, besides a number of other articles which emphasized the difference between nobility and ordinary people of the polity. The important and higher ranking nobles received elephants, a *dula*, an *aruwan*, a hand fan, embroidered cushions, a triangular wooden seat, a stick encased in silver and gold and silver jewelry. The less important among them did not have an elephant or the special *dula*. Each of the three royal ministers possessed two elephants and a red *aruwan*.[515]

When the Tai-Ahoms settled in the Lauhitya valley, the *Tyao* had two officers, who were later raised to ministerial level to assist him in the administration of the fledging polity. In the reign of Dihingiya Raja, after the defeat of the Chutias and the annexation of their domain along with the people into the Tai-Ahom kingdom, a third ministerial office of the *Bar Patra Gohain* was created.[516] The *Satsari* says that the first incumbent was Kanseng, the son of a Naga chief, Khunbao. The *Bar Gohian* and the *Bura Gohain* resented the promotion of a non-Tai-Ahom to the rank of a noble. They refused to share their elephants and their men with the new minister. Hence a new group of people was organised, called *Liksuwan*, and they were allotted to the *Bar Patra Gohain*. The *Bar Gohain* and the *Bura Gohain* were placed in charge of the administration outside the capital complex, the *Bura Gohain* having received the domain of Sadiya and the *Bar Gohain* that of the area of Dihing.[517] Having established the three pillars of the state, as the three ministers were often referred to by the *Swargadeos*, no more new office of minister was created throughout the period of the Tai-Ahom rule in Assam.

A number of royal officers and commanders were appointed which increased as the polity expanded in power and in area. The

515. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 263, pp. 136-38.
516. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 143, pp. 67-68. In another chronicle of the *Satsari*, he is referred to as *Tyao konwar* or Chief Prince. (Ibid., *Chronicle* I: 40, p. 13).
517. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 143, pp. 67-68.

position of *Saring Raja*, *Tipam Raja*, and *Samuguri Raja* were conferred only on royal princes. The selection of a *Swargadeo* was generally made from among these three rajas, besides the very important family of the *Tungkhungiya Raja*. The *Sadiya Khowa Gohain*, *Dihingiya Gohain*, *Salal Gohain*, and *Marangiya Gohain* were provincial governors, like small lords who were directly responsible to the *Swargadeo*. The *Barbarua* and the *Bar Phukan* were the imperial officers posted at Guwahati. Besides the top ranking nobles there were many other imperial officers who received the command of units grouped in clusters of twenty, one hundred and one thousand men. These officers were assigned the tasks related to both agricultural and military activities. Gradually, over time, the Tai-Ahom administration became a highly bureaucratized system. A strict code of conduct was formulated and rules of interaction between the nobility and the royal family were drawn up. Royal marriages were determined by rules of endogamy. It was stipulated that a *Swargadeo* could marry the daughters of the *Gohains*. Royal princesses could marry only the sons of the *Bar Gohain* and the *Bura Gohain*. The *Bar Patra Gohain* being a non-Tai-Ahom could not marry a royal princess, nor marry his daughter to the *Swargadeo*.[518]

Beginning from the initial period of the settlement process, the Tai-Ahom nobles kept a strict check on the power of the leader through a process of elimination of an undesirable *Tyao*. This system did not allow for the development of a definite principle of succession to any one *Tyao*. In selecting a *Tyao*, and later a *Swargadeo*, the only criteria which was adhered to was that the nominee had to be chosen from among the male royal members. Even after the office of the *Swargadeo* was formalized and his person was presented as a semidivine being, the royal ministers were often successful in either removing or electing a candidate of their choice to the position of the *Swargadeo*. The *Satsari Buranji* is explicit in narrating many such instances. Between 1674-1681, the powers of royalty were seized by one imperial officer after another. Debera, the *Bar Barua*, 'became absolutely independent of royal authority.'[519] The *Bura Gohain* led his men against the upstart, dethroned the dummy Swargadeo Tungkhangiya Raja, and instead

518. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 41, p. 13.
519. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 203, p. 99.

'elected a Dihingiya prince as the *Swargadeo*'.[520] This was not the end of the raging factional politics of the period. In the reign of Swargadeo Gobar (1675), the ministers revolted against him. The *Swargadeo* was taken captive and killed[521] and the *Parbatiya konwar* was placed on the throne. He rewarded the *Bura Gohain* with numerous presents, including revenue free land grants, many slaves and servants and a special *dula*. But the nobles of the court became dismayed with the new *Swargadeo* and dethroned him. This time, the *Bar Phukan* of Guwahati, Hula, took over royal power. The youngest of the Samuguri princes was installed as the *Swargadeo*, while 'Hula practically ruled the kingdom'.[522] The *Phukans* of Kaliabar did not agree with the selection. They raised their own candidate, Gadapani, at Kaliabar. After seven days, this faction entered Garhgaon and took the capital. On becoming *Swargadeo,* Gadapani took the Hindu name of Gadadhar Singha and the Tai-Ahom name of Supatpha. With his ascension to the throne, the era of strife between the bureaucracy and the *Swargadeo* came to an end. Peace between the two parties was maintained until the late eighteenth century, when there was a renewal of rivalry between the *Bar Phukan* and the *Bura Gohain*. External agents were invoked, namely the Burmese and the British, who brought their battles to Assam. Finally, in 1838 A.D., the British having, defeated all their rivals after eliminating the Burmese factor from the internal politics of Assam, annexed the kingdom of the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeos*.

Brahmans and Brahmanization

The story of the Tai-Ahom polity is a story of conjunctures and convergences of internal forces and external agencies which influenced the contours of the Tai-Ahom polity. The encounter with brahmans and brahmanic ideology which penetrated the Lauhitya valley from outside was the most important episode in the process of the Tai-Ahom state formation. The socio-political mapping of the Tai-Ahom kingdom by the brahmans legitimised

520. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 205, p. 100.
521. According to one chronicle he was stoned to death (*Satsari, Chronicle* III: 212, p. 104). *Chronicle* IV says his eyes were plucked out and the *Swargadeo* was tortured by his ministers. He finally killed himself with a stone (Ibid., *Chronicle* IV: 272, pp. 142-43).
522. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 274, pp. 147-48.

Assam as the eastern frontier of Hinduism. For a long time, brahmans had been a popular item of import into the Indic kingdom of Kamarupa, especially to the Koch court at Kamata. The newly-established Tai-Ahoms needed a specialized religious staff to initially provide them with a charismatic image, as well, politically legitimize them with the authority to rule. In turn, the migrant brahmans found an eager patron in the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo*. The Tai-Ahom agrarian system, based on wet rice cultivation enabled and secured an economy which could sustain the imported men of religion. A strong Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo* could provide economic security to these brahmans, who received revenue free grants in perpetuity and also endowments for maintenance of religious establishments and temples. In turn, the brahmans constructed a marvellous genealogy of the *Swargadeos* deriving from the Hindu god Indra and thereby created a chronology of the Tai-Ahom kings as Indra Vamsi or the divine rulers of the east. This channeled the process for the legitimation of the *Swargadeos* and empowered them with the right to rule the less endowed.

As early as the fourteenth century, the Tai-Ahoms adopted a policy of Brahmanization. A brahman, who took the name of Sudangpha was selected to be the *Tyao* of the incipient Tai-Ahom domain. After the decisive battle with the Chutias, the trend towards Brahmanizing the kingdom was taken up in earnest by the *Swargadeos*. Brahmans began to play a more crucial role in strengthening the power of the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeos* and their administration, acting as the advisers pertaining to all matters of statecraft, as well presiding over the mystical ceremonies such as installation, consecration of reservoirs and dams for agriculture, royal marriages, sacrifices and festivals. To sustain the brahmans in the kingdom, continuous efforts were made to bring new land under cultivation. An imperial officer called *Bar Barua* was appointed to administer the newly settled peoples in the area of Dihing. To legitimize the occupation, Gonak brahmans were settled there with gifts of gold, silver, cowries and revenue free land.[523] From an early time, brahmans were also appointed to imperial offices within the

523. *Satsari, Chronicle* 1:63, p. 22.

capital complex. In Garhgaon, one Raumuriya brahman was appointed as the *Bhandari Barua*.[524]

In the reign of Pratap Singha, subsequent to the defeat of the 'Bengalis' in Hajo, five new villages in western Assam were settled by the Tai-Ahoms. A brahman was endowed with one fourth of the revenue of these villages.[525] In his reign, brahmans were elevated in status and position within the imperial administration. This was symbolized by gifting elephants to 'four brahman families'.[526] Around 1640, seven additional villages were endowed to brahmans. Brahmans, in their turn, served an important political purpose for the *Swargadeos*. By performing complex rituals and yajnas they reinforced the position and charisma of the *Swargadeo*, and raised him in status vis-a-vis the contesting, but less powerful forces in the kingdom. Brahman envoys represented the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeo* in foreign courts and helped in obtaining political recognition of the Tai-Ahom kingdom.

Three centuries of an official policy of Brahmanization facilitated in the construction of a divine past for the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeos*, and provided opportunities towards improving the agrarian system in the valley. Simultaneous with the process of Brahmanization of the royal court, the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeos* also encouraged the development of a vast water works system for wet rice cultivation in order to sustain the pesants and the newly settled brahman community. The building of reservoirs or digging ponds was elevated to a ritual activity bearing religious significance and were consecrated by brahmans. Every time a new area was occupied, the Tai-Ahoms dug a pond and brought the land under the plough.[527] Most often, brahmans were settled there with revenue grants given in perpetuity.[528] The tradition developed quite early in the settlement process and continued throughout the period of the Tai-Ahom rule in Assam.

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524. The officer in-charge of the Royal Treasury and Stores.
525. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 81, p. 29.
526. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 263, pp. 136-38.
527. *Satsari, Chronicle* I:56, pp. 19-20, 1:59, pp. 20-21, 1:61, p. 21 1:63, p. 22 1:76, pp. 26-27 1:81, p. 29; *Chronicle* III: 146, pp. 69-70, III: 194, p. 83, III: 227, pp. 111-12, III: 253, p. 127; *Chronicle* IV: 263, pp. 136-38, IV: 266, pp. 138-39. IV: 267, p. 139, IV: 275-76, pp. 148-51; *Chronicle* V: 284, p. 160.
528. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 254, pp. 127-28.

The ascension of Gadadhar Singha marked the beginning of a new stage in the Brahmanization of the Tai-Ahom kingdom. A cleansing operation of all non-brahmans was undertaken. The political motivation of this scheme was to abort the growing dissent against the Tai-Ahom royalty spearheaded by the non-Tai-Ahom, non-brahmanic, Vaishnavas. In the seventeenth century, during the period of political crisis in the royal court, the Vaishnava *Satras* emerged as an alternate source of power and authority. They gathered a large group of loyal followers from a variety of non-Brahmanized subjects of the *Swargadeos*. In an attempt to dispossess the Vaishnavas of their growing power, Gadadhar Singha de-hoarded the *Satras*. The gold icons from the famed *Dakshin Satra* were removed and brought to the Tai-Ahom temple at Charaideo.[529] Vaishnava priests were taken captive, and were exiled or put to death in Namrup.

Gadadhar Singha's successor, Swargadeo Rudra Singha, further patronized Brahmanism. The new capital at Rangpur was adorned with many Hindu temples.[530] More Hindu temples were constructed in Guwahati and the revenue of seven villages were given to brahmans settled there.[531] An important element of the new kind of Brahmanism of this period was the introduction of bloody sacrifices in royal rituals and ceremonies. Human beings were sacrificed in the consecration ceremony of the newly constructed temples. It was meant to to placate the external evil forces.[532]

His successor, Siva Singha, surrounded in an ambiance of Brahmanism, withdrew from the royal duties, while his wives, who succeeded one after another ruled the kingdom as the *Bar Raja*.[533] In the meantime, the *Swargadeo* became involved in promoting Brahmanism as a state religion and imposed it on all his subjects. Temples of Vishnu, Shiva, and Kali were built in the new capital at Sibsagar and throughout the kingdom. The non-Arotiyas were put

529. *Satsari, Chronicle* III: 235, pp. 117-18.
530. In saka 1620, he built a temple at Rangpur and adorned it with an icon of a lion, believed to be the father of the Hindu deity Hanuman (*Satsari, Chronicle* III: 237, p. 118).
531. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 275, p. 148-49.
532. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 276, pp. 149-51.
533. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 277, pp. 151-52.

to death. The Vaishnava priests and the Krishna devotees were forced to bow before the icon of the Mother Goddess. Blood of sacrificed animals was smeared on their body and they had to partake *prasad*. Many reserviors were built and brahmans were invited to consecrate them by performing human sacrifices.[534] The tombs of his ancestors were exhumed and cremation of the bodies were re-performed in Brahmanic tradition. The Tai-Ahom traditions which clashed with the new Brahmanism were revoked. Also the old Tai-Ahom icons were replaced and new ones prescribed by the royal brahman pandit were installed in the palace. Every new measure was an attempt to establish the dominance of Brahmanism over and above all other forms of belief and tradition in the Lauhitya valley.

Added to the increased activity of building a number of impressive Brahmanic temples all over the kingdom, a break from the original Tai-Ahom religion was achieved by changing the funeral rites of the *Swargadeos*. In the old Tai-Ahom religion, when the king died his personal servants and his wives were given in sacrifice to him. They were buried with the dead king who was placed in a yellow coloured coffin encased in panned gold sheet within which the body was placed on a bed. The personal attendants of the king - his betel-nut carrier, spittoon carrier, *hengdan* bearer, water carrier, the king's astrologer, cook, bather, gardener, his female servants and other slaves were buried alive. In this way, at least ten people were buried along with the king in his tomb.[535] On the death of a Crown Prince, his companions in life were also sacrificed to him.[536] The burial ceremony of the Tai-Ahom royalty was elaborate, like the installation ceremony of a new *Swargadeo*. In life and in death the Tai-Ahoms had developed various categories to symbolize the passage from one stage to another.

When Swargadeo Gadadhar Singha died (1696), thirty attendants were sacrificed to him. His successor, Swargadeo Rudra Singha stopped the practice and regulated that Tai-Ahom kings should be cremated like the Hindus. In keeping with the old Tai-Ahom tradition of burial, simulated burial was permitted and some

534. *Satsari, Chronicle* IV: 277, pp. 151-52.
535. *Deodhai Buranji*, 'The Funeral custom of the Tai-Ahom Swargadeos', 276, p. 155.
536. *Satsari, Chronicle* I: 84, pp. 29-30; *Chronicle* III: 181, p. 87.

of the personal articles of the *Swargadeo* were buried in an underground vault in Charideo.[537] But the practice of burial was not entirely done away with. Evidence of its survival is found in the tomb of Swargadeo Pramatta Singha (1744-1751). The exhumed tomb bore the remains of ten or twelve skulls.[538]

The symbolic connections forged between the ancient Tai customs and indigenous Assamese, along with Inner Asian traditions were now rejected. The new attempt was at homogenizing the peoples of the Tai-Ahom kingdom through the medium of an overarching religious umbrella of brahmans and brahmanism, and all this was the *Swargadeo*. The effects of superimposing the king's religion on the heterogeneous population of the kingdom ultimately proved to be the undoing of the Tai-Ahoms. Armed rebellion against the political and religious dictates of the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeos* surfaced in the reign of Gaurinath Singha (1780-1794). The Vaishnava Muwamorias attacked the royal palace and in a gesture rejecting the political authority of the *Swargadeo*, set fire to the *Singori Ghar*. The Muwamorias were joined by the 'tribal' groups - the Daflas, Miris, Mishimis and Abors - who repudiated their allegiance to the *Swargadeo*. Confrontations between the Muwamorias, who represented the non-Brahmanized, non-Tai-Ahom peoples, against the Brahmanized, Tai-Ahom elite was long drawn and bloody. In the reign of Gaurinath's successor, Swargadeo Kamaleshwar Singha (1795-1810), the menace of the Muwamorias became so acute that a complete re-organization of the Tai-Ahom military forces had to be undertaken. Mercenaries were hired to train eighteen companies of Assamese soldiers.[539] Large pujas were organized to placate the souls of the ancestors and obtain their blessing against the rival Muwamorias.[540]

All through the eighteenth century, the royal officers and the Tai-Ahom army were kept pre-occupied in fighting the

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537. The change in the funeral custom is explained through the medium of a prophetic dream of Swargadeo Rudra Singha. In his dream he saw that the attendants buried with Gadadhar Singha were extremely unhappy and failing to find a way out of the death trap defiled the dead body by urinating and defecating on it. (*Deodhai Buranji*, 'The Funeral customs of the Tai-Ahom Swargadeos', 279, pp. 156-57).
538. *Deodhai*, 279, pp. 157-58.
539. *Satsari, Chronicle* VI: 304, pp. 171-72.
540. *Satsari, Chronicle* V: 306, p. 172.

Muwamorias, who set up an alternate political structure with their own king and administration. With varying successes both the groups kept fighting, neither able to subdue the other. Internal conflict undermined the political authority and power of the *Swargadeos* and finally in the second half of the eighteenth century foreign help was invoked by the *Bar Phukan*. With the aid of the Burmese, he attacked the Tai-Ahom capital at Garhgaon and dethroned the reigning *Swagadeo*, Chandra Kanta Singha. Later, in 1838 A.D., Assam was annexed by the British and the Tai-Ahom *Swargadeos* and their kingdom became relics of the past.

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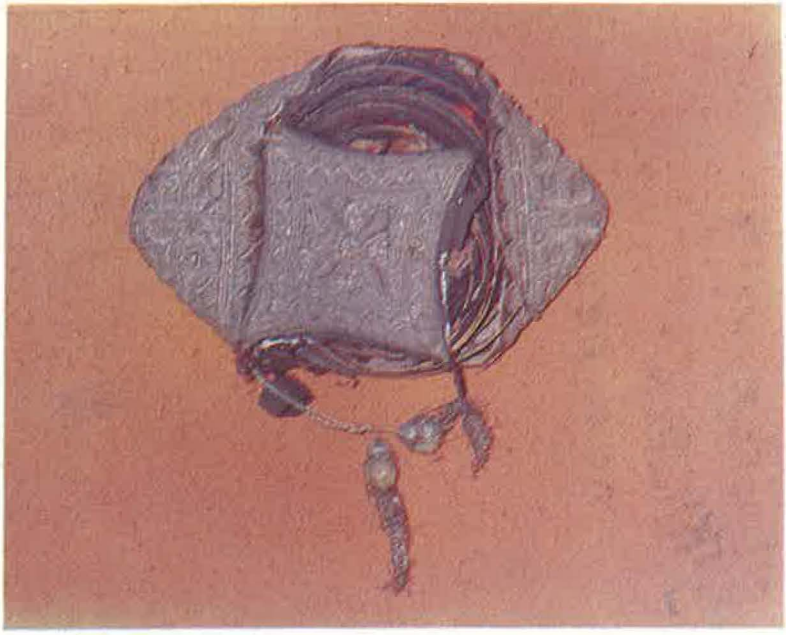
1. Silver coin of Gaurinath Singha (eighteenth century)



2. Royal cap of the Ahom Swargadeo

3. Assamese jewellery from the Ahom period

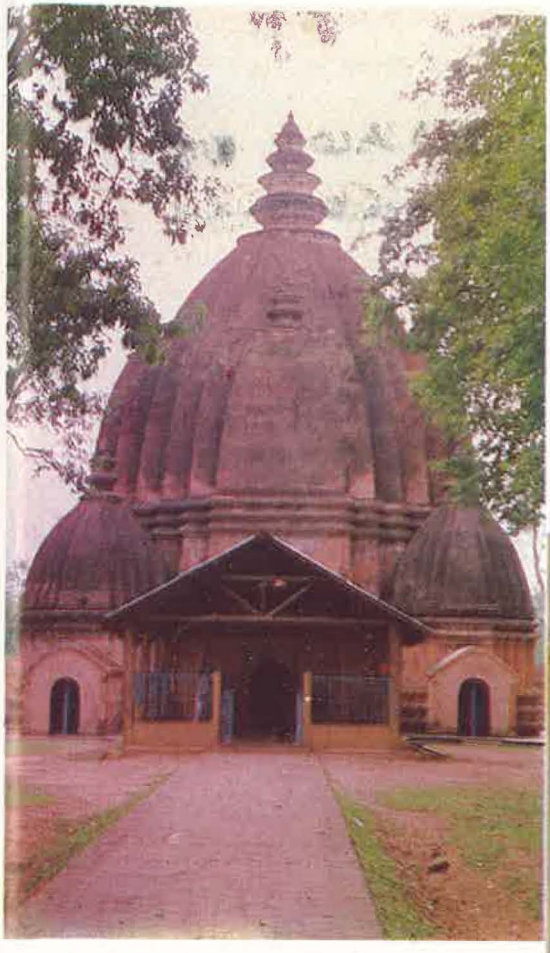
4. Implements of warfare

5. Ruined terrace of the Karengghar at Sibsagar (late eighteenth century)

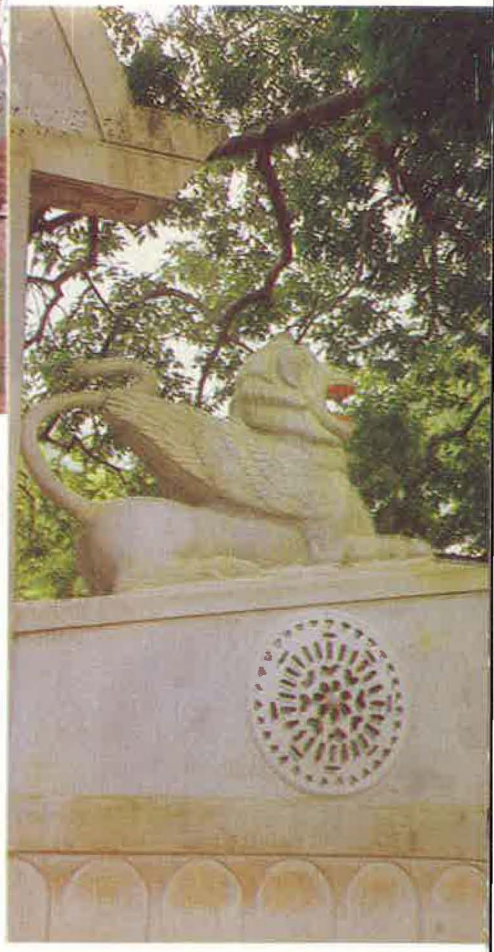
6. Reliefs at Rangghar, Sibsagar (late eighteenth century)

7. Sengreng at Jorhat (modern)

8. Central motif for the Chaklang ceremony

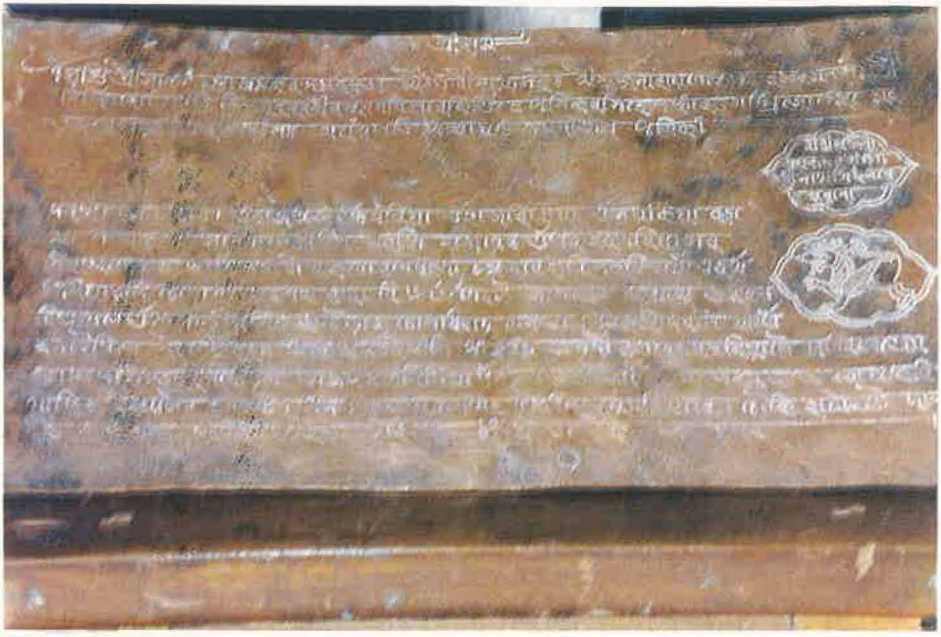


9. Negheriting daul at Daergaon (eighteenth century)



10. Winged lion at Daul Govinda in Guwahati

11. Reliefs of Negheriting daul



12. Copper plate inscription of Gaurinath Singha

13. Stone sculpture of the mother goddess at Negheriting daul

14. Dampata ritual

15. Interior of Shiva daul at Sibsagar

16. Ajit Singha, scion of the royal Tunghkhungia clan

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